

AUGUST

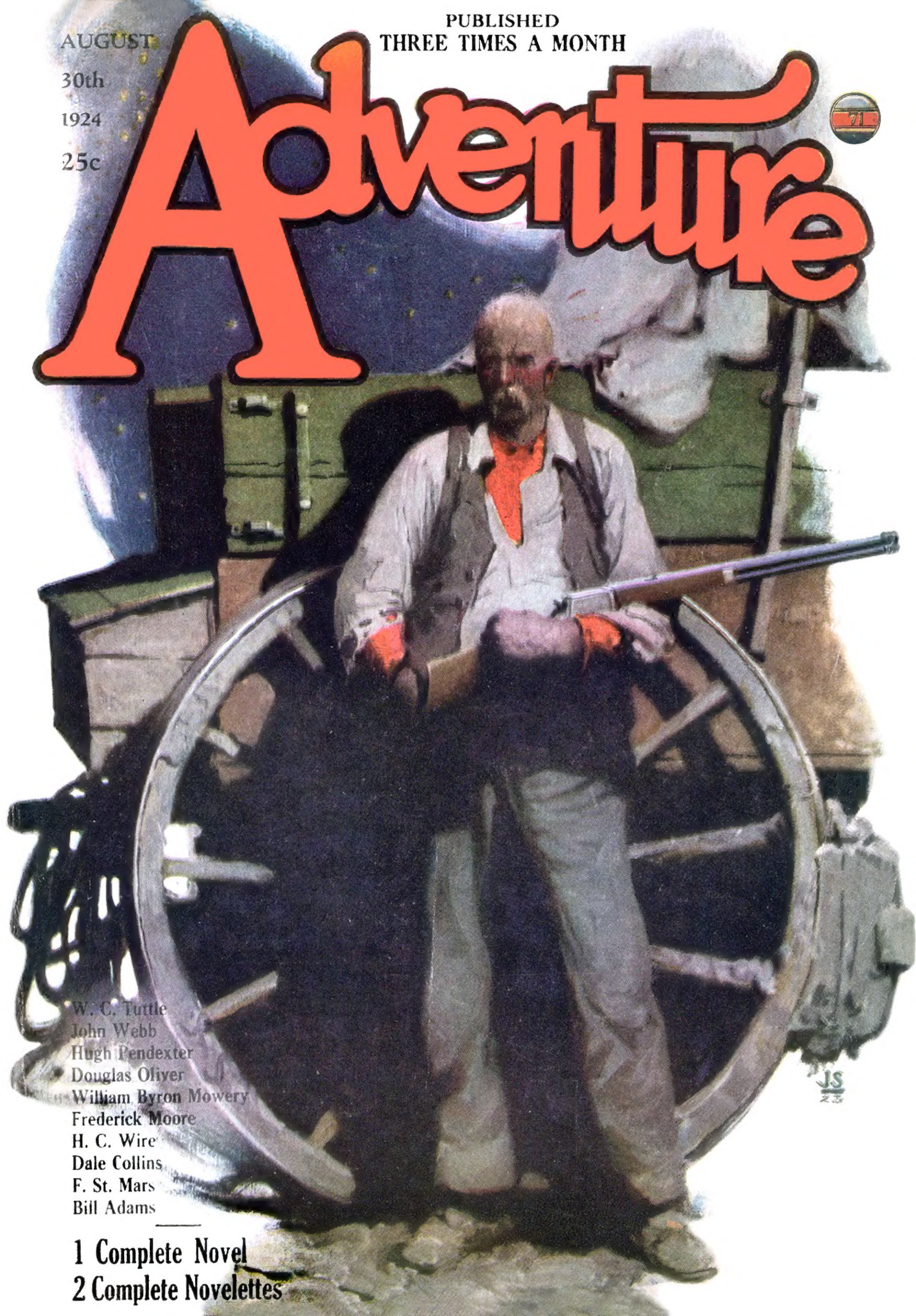
30th

1924

25c

PUBLISHED
THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure



W. C. Tuttle
John Webb
Hugh Pendexter
Douglas Oliver
William Byron Mowery
Frederick Moore
H. C. Wire
Dale Collins
F. St. Mars
Bill Adams

1 Complete Novel
2 Complete Novelettes



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**Quaker
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Beware of Fat

DO you know whether you weigh too much or too little? If your weight is just right, congratulate yourself. Probably not one person in ten knows what his proper weight should be nor realizes how important it is to maintain that weight.

What is the right weight? Experts who have studied the subject of weight in its relation to health tell us that the weight tables generally in use are misleading. They give only average weights, which are the composite of the good and the bad. These averages have been assumed to be the correct weights. As a matter of fact, they are not.

Up to the age of 30, it is well to weigh five or ten pounds more than the average weight for your age and height. But from 30 on, the best weight is from 10% to 20% less than the average. At age 50, men and women are at their best when they weigh considerably *below* the average for their height.

The reason is simple: The extra weight in earlier years is needed to give the body plenty of building material and to fortify it against tuberculosis and other infections to which young people are particularly subject. When we are older and food for growth is not needed, there is no longer any advantage in carrying the heavier burden of weight.

Stop and think of the six oldest people you know. The chances are they are not fat. Life insurance statistics have proved that as a rule the fat do not live to be really old men and women.

Fat is dangerous—a definite menace to life. And this is why: People who drag masses of flesh around are putting a strain upon their vital organs. High blood pressure, trouble with heart, kidneys or lungs often follow along in the train of excessive weight. The heart has to work extra hard pumping blood to tissues that the body *never was meant to have*. The digestive tract has a remorseless burden put upon it trying to dispose of needless food. An eminent specialist says that in at least 40% of the cases—fat is the predisposing cause of diabetes.

Remember, prevention is the better part of reducing. But if you *are* fat and don't want to have heart trouble or any of the diseases that fat induces—what are you to do about it?

Do not take any "fat reducers" except on the advice of your physician. They are usually viciously harmful and reduce nothing but your pocketbook. Have your doctor find out whether there is anything wrong with you physically. Sometimes glandular disturbances will cause fat.

Overweight is not always due to overeating. Exercise does not always reduce. But 90 times out of 100 the trouble is too much and too rich food and too little exercise. If you are overweight do not let laziness or complacency permit you to remain fat. Begin to reduce *right now*.



People past their youth who weigh 20% more than the average have a one-third greater death rate than the average. Those who are 40% overweight have a 50% greater death rate than the average.

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HALEY FISKE, President.

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Adventure

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Vol. XLVIII No. 3
August 30, 1924

Published Three Times a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

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"Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.

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A free question and answer service bureau of information on outdoor life and activities everywhere. Comprising sixty-four geographical sub-divisions, with special sections on Radio, Mining and Prospecting, Weapons Past and Present, Salt and Fresh Water Fishing, Tropical Forestry, Aviation, Army Matters, United States and Foreign; and American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal.		
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OUT of the fog came an air-plane, a man—and a murder. "DEAD RED ANTS," a mystery novel, of the U. S. Naval Air Service, by Joel Townsley Rogers, complete in the next issue.

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Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

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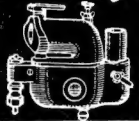
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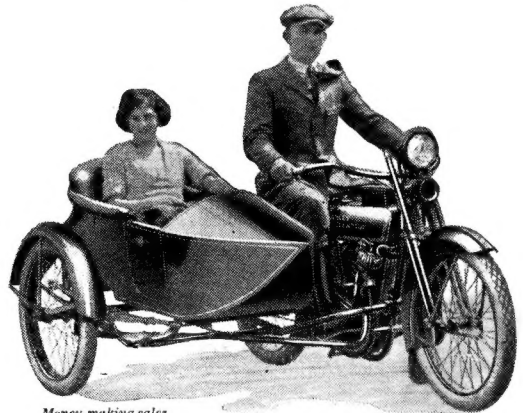
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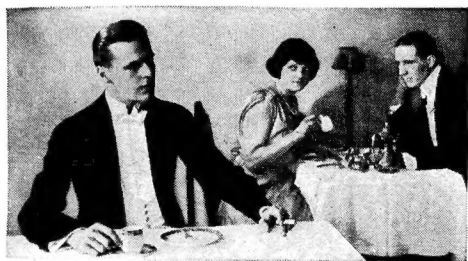
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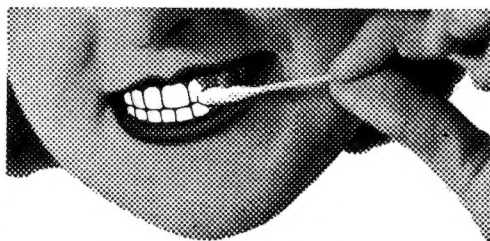
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(Mrs. Julia W. Stafford of Shanghai, China)



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"I saw an advertisement about Fleischmann's Yeast. Eagerly, enthusiastically, I tried it. I religiously continued the treatment and soon began to feel strong. I am now in perfect health with the bloom of youth in my face. Fleischmann's Yeast has done all this for me."

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There is nothing mysterious about its action. It is not a "cure-all," not a medicine in any sense. But when the body is choked with the poisons of constipation—or when its vitality is low so that skin, stomach, and general health are affected—this simple, natural

food achieves literally amazing results.

Concentrated in every cake of Fleischmann's Yeast are billions of tiny yeast-plants, alive and active. At once they go to work—invigorating the whole system, clearing the skin, aiding digestion, strengthening the intestinal muscles and making them healthy and active. *Health* is yours once more.

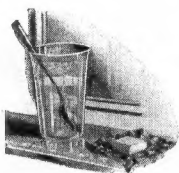
***Dissolve one cake in a glass of water
(just hot enough to drink)***

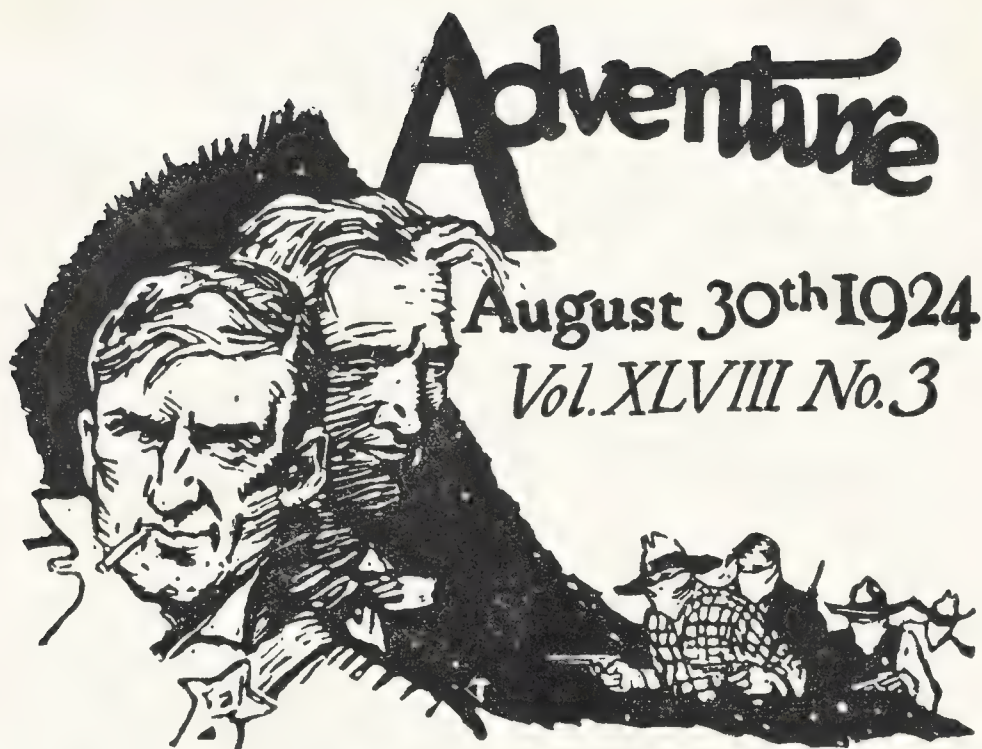
—before breakfast and at bedtime. Fleischmann's Yeast, when taken this way, is especially effective in overcoming or preventing constipation.

Or eat 2 or 3 cakes a day—spread on bread or crackers—dissolved in fruit juices or milk—or eat it plain.

Fleischmann's Yeast for Health comes only in the tinfoil package—it cannot be

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Sun Dog Loot

A Complete Novel by W.C. Tuttle

Author of "Just For a Laugh," "Rustler's Roost," etc.

BRICK" DAVIDSON hooked his spurred heels over the edge of his desk, shifted his position slightly and began rolling a cigaret, his eyes half-shut, as if deep in thought.

Brick was of medium height, with a thin, freckled face and red hair. It was red hair—not auburn at all; red hair, the color of a new brick. His mouth was wide, his eyes blue and ears rather prominent. Just now his faded blue shirt hiked up around his ears and his overalls threatened to withdraw from his short-topped high-heeled boots.

Over the wetting of his cigaret he squinted at the wall across from him, where a collection of reward notices covered the rough boards. There were many notices in this collection, with rewards ranging from fifty

dollars to a hundred times that amount. Some bore photographs of those wanted, but the majority were mere descriptions, which might fit any one.

There were three other men in the office with Brick, seated in chairs near the desk; three serious-faced men who waited for Brick to speak. One of them was Bill Grant, a tall, sour-faced, middle-aged man, with a wispy mustache and a nervous manner. Another was Al Hendricks, heavy-set, dark complexioned, slow of speech; while the third was Sam Leach, slight of physique, bat-eared and inclined to be sarcastic. Grant and Hendricks were ranchers, while Leach was a cattle-buyer. And the three of them composed the Board of Commissioners of Sun Dog County, of which Brick Davidson was the sheriff.

Brick lighted his cigaret and shifted his eyes to the three men.

"Well," he said slowly, "I reckon yuh think that comin' to see me will change things a lot, don'tcha?"

Grant cleared his throat, causing the wispy mustache to vibrate, and Brick grinned openly. The mustache amused him. He had remarked anent that futile effort of Grant's, assuring him that he was too stingy to fill his soul with enough fertilizing to grow hair. And Grant was sensitive.

"We just came," said Grant coldly, "to kinda talk to yuh about it, Davidson."

"Sure, sure," interposed Hendricks quickly. "We've been talkin' among ourselves, Brick."

Brick squinted at Leach, as if expecting some statement from him, but Leach's sarcastic smile was his only response.

"There was that Red Hill hold-up," said Hendricks suggestively.

"And the bank robbery at Silverton," added Brick.

Leach laughed, but his laugh ended in a yawn, when Brick jerked his heels off the desk and turned in his chair.

"What in —— do yuh find to laugh at in that, Sam?" he demanded.

"Nothin'." Leach was almost apologetic.

"Course it ain't nothin' to laugh about," said Grant. "It's pretty —— serious, I'd say. In fact, it's so serious that we've sent for a professional range detective to try and hang the crime onto the guilty parties."

"Ye-e-eah?" Brick's red mane of hair lifted slightly, as he inhaled deeply to control his temper.

"Yeah," nodded Grant. "Of course he won't interfere with yore office in any way, Brick. You jist go along like you've been goin', and let him work it out in his own way. Them detectives *sabe* criminals."

Brick grinned in spite of his anger. A wave of crime had swept across the Sun Dog country in the past few weeks, causing the sheriff's office to ride the hoofs off their horses, but without results.

It began with the hold-up of the Red Hill stage, when the bandits had stolen the treasure-box, which held several bars of gold, from the Red Hill mine. A few days later the Redrock stage was robbed, netting the robbers several hundred dollars. Then, to cap the climax, two masked men entered the bank at Silverton and forced

the cashier to hand them over five thousand dollars.

And they had left no clues. Descriptions varied until Brick was of the opinion that the jobs had been done by three different outfits. The driver of the Red Hill stage swore that there were only two men. One was a big man and the other rather below medium height. The tall man was the spokesman.

In the Redrock robbery, the driver declared that there were two men, one rather tall and slender, the other medium-sized. The medium-sized man was the spokesman. And the cashier of the bank, frightened almost into a panic, could not be positive that there were two or three men, but he did know that the slim one did the talking.

The peculiar feature of the bank robbery was the fact that a fire had started in a shack down at the other end of the town, and that while every one was down there, trying to put out the fire, the robbery had taken place. No one had seen the robbers enter or leave, except the cashier, who admitted that he was so frightened that he did not know which way they went after leaving the bank, nor whether they were on foot or mounted.

And now the county commissioners were employing a professional thief-catcher. Brick reshaped his cigaret and smiled.

"He'll prob'ly catch 'em," Brick mused aloud.

"Y'betcha!" Sam Leach got to his feet, indicating that as far as he was concerned the meeting was over.

The others got to their feet as a man entered the doorway and halted just inside.

It was "Harp" Harris, the deputy sheriff. Harp was about two inches over six feet in height, but so thin that he looked much taller. His face was set in lines which combined both hope and despair—with despair predominating. His mouth was wide, his nose thin and almost transparent, while his ears grew at right angles to his face, giving him a perpetual listening expression.

Harp squinted at the three commissioners and shifted his eyes to Brick.

"Havin' a li'l party, Brick?" he asked softly.

Harp was not any too popular with the commissioners.

"Democrat," replied Brick grinning.

Grant and Hendricks forced a smile, as

they walked past Harp, but Leach gave Harp a sarcastic squint, bestowed upon him a look of disgust and walked past, with his nose in the air. Harp turned and pursed his lips as he watched Leach disappear. Brick grinned, as Harp turned and snorted softly.

"Some day I'm goin' t' just about squirsh that jasper," said Harp slowly. "Jist squirsh him absolute and final. What did them three fried aigs want, Brick?"

"Their main object was to see if I've forgotten that there's crime among us," replied Brick.

"Oh!"

Harp's nose twitched slightly and he sat down against the wall, ignoring the three vacant chairs. From his pocket he took a jew's-harp, fitting it carefully between his teeth. Brick squinted at him thoughtfully, shaking his head.

"Don't," said Brick pleadingly. "My —, aint there enough misery in the world without you addin' to it, Harp?"

Harp removed the offending instrument and dangled it across his knee, clutched in a bony hand. He nodded understandingly, his serious eyes considering the troubled sheriff. It was not often that Harp would quit playing until he was ready. He was not musical, but seemed to derive much enjoyment from his own efforts.

"Aw right, Brick—I won't regale yuh with music now. Sad music cheers me up, don'tcha know it? Sometimes, I wonder—" Harp rubbed the palm of his hand on the tightly drawn knee—"I wonder why paw didn't educate me for the undertakin' business. Man, I'd 'a' sure been a dinger. I jist love to hear them singin' 'Rock of Ages,' and by golly, I—"

Brick reached for his gun and Harp threw up both hands.

"You danged pall-bearer!" snorted Brick. "You keep up that kind of talk and there'll be singin'—but you won't hear it."

"That's right—jump onto me." Harp grew indignant. "You big bully! I s'pose you'd strike me, wouldn't yuh? Huh! It's brutes like you that makes this world hard for us frail critters. I do everythin' I can for yuh, and this is the treatment I get."



BRICK slumped down in his chair and began rolling a cigaret, as some one came clumping along the wooden sidewalk up to the office door. Then a head, surmounted by an ornate sombrero,

was shoved inside from an angle that would indicate the man to be of abnormal height. The face beneath the sombrero was both broad and long, serious, except for the wide brown eyes. Brick glanced up at him, but showed no recognition, Harp squinted at the door, looked back at Brick and slapped himself on the knee.

"Now, jump onto me," he invited Brick. "Abuse me, cowboy. Go ahead and try to be cruel. Ha, ha! Succor is at hand."

"Sucker?"

The big man came inside and started slowly toward Harp, who threw both hands up to his face, as if to shut out the sight.

"Who's a sucker?" demanded the big man, shaking himself until the silver *conchos* of his bat-wing chaps creaked under the strain.

He slapped a big palm against his holster and halted in the middle of the floor.

"Love of gosh!" exclaimed Harp. "It's little Lord Fauntleroy! Welcome home."

The big man started toward Harp, but Brick slid between them and he halted.

"You danged cow-town comedians can't bust up my office," declared Brick. "Set down, 'Silent'—you runt."

Silent Slade flapped his big arms dismally and sank down in the nearest chair.

"I seen them three deuces walk out of here; so I come over to see what the rest of the deck was doin'," said Silent. "I can smell trouble when I see them three pelicans together."

"Brick's so danged dumb that they has to come over here every week to remind him he's the sheriff," offered Harp seriously.

"Ought to pin his star on the wall," observed Silent. "Might nail her to the door, so every time he comes up to the place he'll know what he's comin' here for."

But Brick did not take offense at their jokes. They knew that Brick was capable, honest, and was doing everything in his power to keep the peace of Sun Dog County. Silent Slade worked for the Nine-Bar-Nine cattle outfit, located about twelve miles southeast of Marlin City, where Brick had been foreman before he had been elected sheriff. Harp Harris had also been one of the Nine-Bar-Nine cowpunchers.

Old Lafe Freeman, owner of the Nine-Bar-Nine, had sworn to high heaven that the gods were against him, when he lost Brick and Harp. Old Lafe was a little, old, grizzled cow-man; one of the fast-disappearing type of old-timers, who had carved

out a niche in cowland with the combination of a six-shooter and square-dealing.

After an appreciable period of silence, the big Nine-Bar-Nine cowboy yawned widely and audibly.

"Didja ever try sleep for that?" queried Harp.

"That has all the earmarks of a jest," observed Silent. "Some day I'm goin' to date time from the minute yuh made me laugh."

Silent turned to Brick, opened his mouth to capacity and yelled loud enough to shake the windows—

"How in — are yuh?"

"Kinda downcast," replied Brick softly.

"Uh-huh. Yuh ought to be. Say, old Lafe's been down to Silverton—kinda ridin' around—and he says it don't look a — of a lot like you was goin' to be reelected, Brick."

"Thasso?" Brick showed interest. It was nearing the first of October, and in November the primary election would be held.

"Dang right, it's so," nodded Silent. "Lafe says that you ain't nowadays as popular as yuh was a few weeks ago."

"What have I done?" queried Brick, grinning.

"Well," Silent grinned widely, "they seem to think yuh ain't done nothin'. I s'pose them three high-and-mighties were over here to kinda invigorat' yuh, wasn't they?"

Brick nodded. He realized now that these robberies were happening at a very inopportune time for him. The Sun Dog voters were very likely to judge him on present showings instead of on his past records; and the sheriff's office was the one big issue in cow-land politics.

His opponent, Henry Stagg, known as "Hank," had been considered more or less of a joke as a candidate. He operated the stage lines from an office in Silverton, where he could be found at nearly all times, reciting his own deeds of valor.

Hank was tall and angular, with a raspy voice and a wonderful vocabulary of profanity, gained from driving stage teams. He wore his gun in a shoulder-holster, because his hips were too thin to support a belt, and his favorite amusement was shooting magpies on the wing with a thirty-thirty rifle. This latter branded him as a fairly good rifle shot.

"They brought me some very good news," said Brick. "When it comes to bringin' good cheer, they're a fine flock of buzzards.

Sun Dog County is to be investigated by a professional detective and I'm to just go along in my own dumb way and let him do the lookin' through the knot-holes."

"Is—thasso?" Silent exploded and his mouth remained open.

"Relax!" snorted Harp. "My gosh, anybody'd think by yore face that it was in the dead of Winter instead of fly-time, Silent."

"Hm-m-m! I'm dead amazed." Thus Silent seriously.

"Settled fact," grinned Brick. "I dunno who he is nor how many of 'em is to come among us; so don't question me. I didn't know that the commissioners took my job so seriously."

"And they don't even ask us to help him," added Harp.

"Well, you hadn't ought to let that worry yuh," grinned Silent. "As far as the detective is concerned, somebody will probably kill him before he gets far into the mystery; but things are sure breakin' bad for our li'l sheriff."

"Lafe was talkin' with 'Soapy' Caswell, and Soapy is kinda inclined to the opinion that Brick ain't exertin' himself none to speak about. He didn't come right out and say it, but that's the impression he handed Lafe."

"And he swings the vote of Silverton," said Harp sadly. "He dang near swings Sun Dog County, as far as that's concerned. He owns the bank here in Marlin, the Silverton bank and the Redrock bank; and when yuh own enough banks, yuh kinda controls a lot of them X's that folks mark down on their ballot."

Brick straightened up in his chair and reached for his tobacco.

"You two jiggers must 'a' got up on the wrong side of the bunk this mornin', didn't yuh? Mebbe I better order all flags at half-mast and put crape on the door. All I've got to do is to beat Hank Stagg for the nomination."

"Yeah, that's all," said Silent dryly. "Just beat Hank for the nomination, tha's all. And then you've got to beat the nominee on the other ticket. But let me tell yuh somethin', red feller: If you don't put the deadwood on these stick-up jaspers pretty danged quick, you couldn't beat a drum."

"I ain't raggin' yuh, Brick. — knows, I'm for yuh. But it's a cinch that there ain't another man in Sun Dog County that can do more than you've done; but folks

don't stop to consider that part of it. Yo're hired to catch criminals—so you've got to catch 'em, tha'sall."

"Tha'sall," nodded Brick seriously. "I remember, when I was a little kid I had to recite a poem in school. It was somethin' about Napoleon Bonaparte. It had a line like this—

"A very easy thing to plan, but difficult to do;
As Wellington made clear to him one day at Waterloo."

"Or it might be kinda like the Frenchman's flea-powder, in which the directions said, 'First catch the little flea.'"

"Still it might be a danged good thing for me and Brick, if he did get beat," observed Harp. "Livin' in the city this-away is plumb ruinin' both of us."

Brick grinned at his deputy, but the lanky one was serious. Marlin City was a city in name only. By virtue of its central location, it was the county-seat of Sun Dog County, but this honor had never caused it to advance beyond the small, cow-town stage.

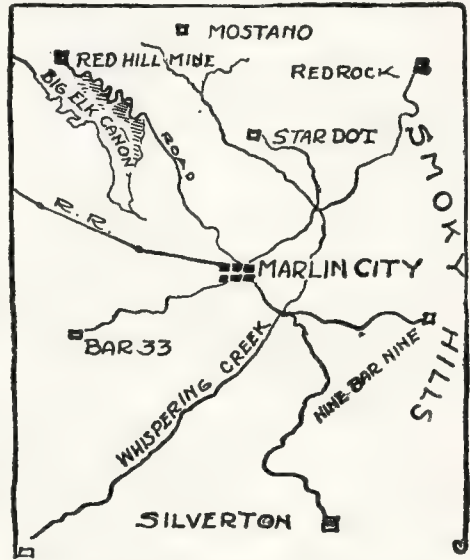
It had one street, not too straight and not too long, bordered with unpainted buildings, which were mostly of the false-fronted style of architecture. The wooden sidewalks, four feet in width, oozed pitch in the Summer; and in the Winter the excessive cold caused the nails to snap out of the two-by-four girders, leaving the top-boards free to rattle and clatter underfoot, like walking over an unmusical xylophone.

Of shade-trees there was none. In fact, some one had said that there was only one tree between Marlin City and the North Pole. A branch line of the C. P. Railroad had recently been completed into Marlin City, giving them transportation for stock and mining products; but the advent of a railroad had not caused any perceptible boom in the country.

Brick Davidson had been sheriff of Sun Dog County for two years, during which time both Silent and Harp had worked as deputies; not because they liked the work, but because Brick had needed the services of trustworthy men. Silent Slade had won his nickname because of his ability to talk continuously. He was never short on conversation, except when asleep. Silent was slow of movement, because of his great size, except when the occasion demanded speed; but he was not slow of temper.

Harp Harris was slow to anger, but loved

trouble. He could ride anything he could saddle, and rope with deadly accuracy. But his favorite occupation was playing the jew's-harp. And no one except Harp could



recognize his tunes; but there was something about that weird *tung-g-ging* that soothed the soul of the lean, angular cowpuncher and caused him to relax and close his eyes in ecstasy.

Just now he placed the instrument between his teeth, relaxed against the wall and struck a preliminary note.

"My —!" exclaimed Silent, getting to his feet. "That — thing is about to start agin', Brick. C'mon; I'll buy yuh a drink."

"All right," grinned Brick.

They walked outside, leaving Harp humped against the wall, moaning through the vibrating tongue of the harp, his right hand fanning slowly past one of his bat-ears, his eyes shut; while one of his up-turned feet jerked an occasional accompaniment, all out of time with the beat of his alleged tune.



"BY GOSH, you bettair keep away from de grizz-a-lee," warned Mose La Clede, a gaunt, bearded Canadian-Frenchman, hitching his belt higher about his hips and shifting the huge quid of tobacco in his cheek.

"She's de bad wan, and she's 'ongry for little boy."

Little "Whizzer" Malloy, five years of age, lifted his inquiring brown eyes and

backed away so quickly that the dragging spur on his little foot tripped him and he fell flat in the dirt.

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed the big man, as he picked the little fellow up and stood him on his feet.

The big grizzly in the pole cage rumbled deeply and flung his chest against the front of the cage, biting at the barrier. The semicircle of curious onlookers grinned as the youngster backed away, trying to straighten the spur and watch the bear at the same time. A horse, tied to one of the hitch-racks, snorted as the bear-scent assailed its nostrils, and snapped the tie-rope on a backward surge.

A cowboy spat out a curse, ran into the street from a saloon and cornered the animal before it had a chance to leave for parts unknown. That the idle population of Silverton was interested in Mose La Clede's grizzly was attested by the fact that most of them were already crowding around the cage, which was placed in the street in front of the stage-office.

La Clede had trapped the animal in the Smoky Hills, where he had kept it until making a deal with an Eastern zoo. It was a full-grown specimen, savage as a tiger and as powerful as any four-legged animal could be. The pole cage creaked under its lunges, and the crowd shifted uneasily.

"How much does he weigh, La Clede?" asked Hank Stagg, who stood at a respectful distance.

Hank was in charge of the stage lines, and it was one of his vehicles that was to transport the grizzly to the railroad at Marlin City.

"By gosh, I'm dunno," replied La Clede, scratching his head. "We weigh her on de hay-scale and she's twelve hundred, forty pound. De cage weigh—I'm dunno how much, but I'm t'ink de bear mak' 'bout ten hun'red."

"Then how in — are we goin' to load it?" queried Hank. "There ain't enough of us to lift that weight."

"I'm know how," grinned La Clede. "We tak' two, t'ree plank and some round pole for de roller; *sabe?* We block de wagon, hitch team to cage by de rope, and pull her up."

"All right," growled Hank. "Get yore planks and rollers."

The crowd, ever ready to assist, went in search of the required articles, while "Baldy" Malloy, the Whispering Creek stage-driver,

went to the livery-stable to get the team, followed closely by Whizzer, whose spur tripped him every few feet.

But Whizzer did not whimper. He felt that the spur made him a cowpuncher, and he would wear that spur if it was the last thing he ever did. Whizzer's mother had died shortly after he was brought into the world, and Whizzer had soon learned that there was little sympathy in the world for a cry-baby.

Not that Baldy did not love his son. He thought that the sun arose and set especially for Whizzer, and they were inseparable when Baldy's trip was finished. Baldy was short, fat and bald, with weak, blue eyes and an insipid, rope-colored mustache.

Back they went from the stable with the team of half-wild bronchos, almost unmanageable when they scented the bear. Whizzer carried his spur in both hands, as he trotted along behind in the dust, his brown eyes wide with anticipation.

Two heavy planks had been secured, and some men were coming with a pole, which would be cut into short roller-lengths. One end of the cage was lifted onto the planks, which extended into the rear of the wagon-box, up which the cage was to be dragged.

At risk of losing one or both of his hands, La Clede managed to insert a rope through the bottom and side of the cage, tied it tightly and flung the loose end out over the front of the wagon.

The cage was tilted slightly and a roller inserted beneath.

"By —, I don't like that cage!" declared "Slim" Hunter, a sad-faced cowpuncher. "Them there poles ain't fastened with nothin' but rawhide."

"By gosh, dey hold," panted La Clede. "Plenty rawhide. She's put on wet, an den she's dry hout. Bettair den de nail."

Baldy was having trouble with the team, which were frantic from the bear-scent and from the angry, deep-throated rumble of the big beast. With the help of two more men he managed to fasten the rope to the double-tree, and was ready for the loading.

"Keep 'way from de cage," warned La Clede. "Dat — bear she's reach hout. All right—hup she's go!"

There was no chance for a steady pull. The frightened team surged into their collars, fairly jerking Baldy off his feet, and the bear-cage went slithering up the planks and

into the wagon-box, catching one corner of the box and ripping it loose from the wagon-bed.

"Whoa!" yelled La Clede. "Stop de team!"

But the team had ideas of their own. They swung sidewise, kicking, plunging, with Baldy digging his heels into the hard surface of the street, trying to stop them. Further around they swung, until at right angles to the wagon they straightened out the rope and fairly yanked the bear-cage through the side-board of the wagon.

For a moment it seemed to hang in mid-air, then crashed down to the hard earth, striking on one corner. Came the snapping of overwrought rawhide, the splintering of poles, and the grizzly, dazed, fighting mad, shook the poles off his roached neck and stood forth as free as he was the day before La Clede's trap cut off his freedom.

Brick Davidson was riding into Silverton, and drew up his horse about a hundred feet away from the scene of action. He did not know what was being done, until the grizzly emerged from the shattered cage.

In the excitement Baldy let loose of his lines and the team bolted with the remnants of the cage bounding and crashing along behind them. Horses broke away from the hitch-racks and dashed wildly about the street, but no one paid them any heed. The crowd had scattered for places of safety, except little Whizzer Malloy, and now they fairly screamed their warnings to the little, brown-faced, brown-eyed baby, who stood there in the middle of the street, spur in hand, facing a blood-hungry grizzly.

They were not over six feet apart. Somewhere a six-shooter cracked, fired by a nervous hand, and the bullet spouted dust between the baby and the bear. With almost incredible speed for such an unwieldy-looking animal, the grizzly closed the gap, knocking little Whizzer flat on his back.

"Don't shoot!" screamed Baldy Malloy. "My God, don't shoot!"

The big bear was master of the situation now. With mane erect, rumbling defiance at those who had attempted to send him into captivity, he crouched lower over the dazed child. Suddenly his head dropped and he gathered the child in his mouth. As he swung up his head Brick Davidson was running toward him, six-shooter in his hand.

Some one yelled a warning at the red-

headed sheriff, but he did not hesitate. Brick was making his attack from the rear and he was making it at top speed. Some one in the crowd threw a sombrero in the direction of the bear, which swung its head, as though to meet this new danger; and at that moment Brick fairly leaped through the air and landed on the grizzly.

It was so unexpected that the bear remained motionless for a second; and in that moment Brick twisted his left hand into that roached mane and set his spurs deeply into the powerful shoulders of the animal.

With a flip of its neck the grizzly flung little Whizzer aside and the little boy started crawling blindly away. Quick as a flash the bear whirled completely around, seeking to dislodge this new enemy, but Brick was all set for the ride.

Two powerful lunges failed to unseat the rider, and then the bear reared upright, clawing wildly, roaring with rage. Brick was, in range parlance, "pullin' leather," but none of the audience denied him that right. It was the first time that any of them had seen a bucking grizzly.

But no one came to his assistance; no one wanted to get within reach of that terrible mount. And as the grizzly, upright on its hind legs, threatened to fall backward, Brick's six-shooter spouted flame and lead into the animal's brain.

Twice the big .45 roared dully before the grizzly plunged forward from its upright position. It went flat in the dirt, surged to all fours, but went down again from the third shot, sprawling in a grotesque heap. Brick fell off, rolled over once and came back to his feet, ready for more.

But the grizzly was finished. The three big slugs of lead had done their work, and the Eastern zoo would never see the big grizzly from the Smoky Hills.



THE crowd surged into the street, too amazed for words. They quickly surrounded Brick and the grizzly, trying to congratulate Brick and to alibi themselves at the same time.

"I threw the hat," announced Slim Hunter proudly. It was like the sparrow's announcement of, "I killed Cock Robin."

Baldy Malloy, hatless, his face streaked with perspiration and dust, carrying little Whizzer under his arm, broke through the crowd and halted in front of Brick. He was breathing too heavily for words, and could

only stare at Brick, who grinned widely at the serious expression on little Whizzer's face.

Baldy did not offer to shake hands with Brick; just stared at him in a dazed way. The crowd was silent now. Then the youngster shoved out two little grimy hands, clutching at the big spur, and announced in a triumphant treble—

"By golly, I held onto her, y'betcha!"

Baldy glanced down at the two hands, shifted the boy to where he could grasp him with both hands, hugged him tightly to his breast and stumbled away with the one muttered exclamation—

"God!"

The crowd stared after him for a moment and turned back to Brick, whose eyes were suspiciously moist. Mose La Clede's big, bony hand was thrust out to Brick, and his voice boomed:

"By gosh, dat was nervy treek! I'm los' de bear, but I'm glad for save de leetle keed. You mak' de good ride, sheriff; by gosh, you mak' de — good ride!"

"I sure throwed that hat," announced Slim again. If there was any glory to spare, Slim wanted some of it.

"I'm sure glad yuh thought of doin' that, Slim," said Brick warmly. "It attracted him long enough to give me a chance to make my mount."

"I knowed it," grinned Slim, "and I sure timed m' throw. It takes quick thinkin' in a case like that."

"I'm buyin' a drink for everybody!" yelled Otto Falk, proprietor of the Short Horn saloon. "Come and get it."

The crowd was willing. They needed something strong now.

"I've got a perfectly good team out there some'ers, draggin' what used to be a bear cage," complained Hank Stagg. "They'll prob'ly be plumb ruined; but I'm goin' to have a drink. By —, I'm through with grizzly bears. That big son-of-a-gun was jist about to glom that poor little kid."

"Wasn't he sore? Whoo-ee! I betcha that grizzly could 'a' whipped all the lions in Africky. Might as well try to stop a railroad engine. Quick, too; quick as—"

"My hat's ruined, too," complained Slim ruefully. "That — bear done his wardenance on it and then some of these heavy-heeled cow-persons walked all over it. They're so — ignorant that they don't know what a hat is, 'less it's on somebody's head."



BALDY MALLOY headed straight toward his own shack, going down the main street, clinging tightly to Whizzer, who was willing to ride, even if he did not understand what it was all about.

As they came past McGill's saloon, McGill, a portly, hard-faced man, stopped them and asked Baldy what had caused all the excitement up the street. There were three other men with McGill.

"Didn't yuh see it?" asked Baldy hoarsely.

"Wouldn't ask you, if we did?" growled McGill. "We was playin' poker and heard them shots fired."

Baldy stood the boy up on the sidewalk, while he hastily sketched out what had been done.

"And he rode that bear, straight-up, made him let go of Whizzer, and then killed the bear with his six-gun," finished Baldy.

McGill spat thoughtfully and squinted at the three men in the doorway.

"Made a hero out of himself right in front of a crowd," said McGill sarcastically. "Pretty — good advertisin', eh?"

McGill laughed hoarsely and turned to Baldy, just in time to receive Baldy's right fist square in his nose; and the fist had every ounce of weight and strength that Baldy possessed behind it.

Baldy's one punch was sufficient. McGill fell into his own doorway, his shoulders striking the edge of the step and the back of his head fairly bouncing off the floor. None of the three men made any move to assist McGill. Baldy blew on his bruised knuckles picked Whizzer off the sidewalk and went on toward his own shack.

McGill recovered sufficiently to get back on his feet, spat out a tooth, along with a weird assortment of profanity, and went back into the saloon to try and find out, with the aid of a mirror, just why his nose seemed so out of proportion to the rest of his face.

"You touched Baldy on a tender spot, Mac," said one of the men. "Yuh see, Brick Davidson jist saved Baldy's kid."

"All right," growled McGill, like a man suffering from a heavy cold. "There can't nobody hit me and get away with it."

"As far as Baldy is concerned, you better let things go as they lie," advised one of the men.

"Yeah, I s'pose," said McGill darkly, squinting at himself in the mirror. "Didja

ever see a nose like that? And I lost a good tooth, too."

Brick accepted several drinks, along with the adulations of the crowd. Every one had a different version of the affair, and Brick knew that inside of an hour there would be a dozen men who would swear that he had killed at least fifty grizzly bears single-handed.

Slim Hunter had reached the crying stage—sobbing over the ruination of his new sombrero; so Brick managed to sneak out during a heated argument. Across the street, in a general store, he encountered Soapy Caswell and Sam Leach.

Soapy was a typical cattleman; as gray as a badger, and with a similar disposition. He had acquired control of the banking business of Sun Dog County, with banks at Marlin City, Silverton and Redrock; but his personal interests ran stronger to draw poker than to finances. He owned the Circle Cross ranch, located about three miles east of Silverton.

Soapy and Leach had heard of the grizzly incident, and Soapy congratulated Brick with:

"Hear yo're ridin' 'em savage these days, Brick. Ha, ha, ha! By golly, yuh ought to get a medal for that. Shore took a lot of nerve. How are yuh?"

He held out his hand to Brick, but Leach merely lifted his brows slightly and busied himself with looking into a fly-specked show-case. They shook hands and Soapy indicated with a gesture that he wanted to see Brick outside.

Brick bought some tobacco and moved out of the store with Soapy, halting out near the hitch-rack. Soapy was not one to beat about the bush.

"Brick, if you don't slap the deadwood on some of these stick-up jaspers, yore cake'll be all dough at the primaries. There's a lot of folks that has an idea that a sheriff must be smarter'n —; don'tcha know it?"

"I'm smart," said Brick seriously.

Soapy nodded quickly.

"I know yuh are, Brick. The smartest man I ever knowed was a plumb —ed fool."

"Who was he?" queried Brick.

"Well," Soapy spat thoughtfully, "I hate to give him away like this, but bein' as yuh asked kinda point-blank—it's me."

Soapy chuckled at his own wit and slapped Brick on the shoulder.

"That Redrock stage hold-up cost me five thousand dollars, Brick. I'm not sendin' any more money by stage, y'betcha. That other hold-up cost the Red Hill mine a nice piece of change, and that bank robbery here nicked me for a nice little pot.

"I *sabe* that yo're doin' everythin' yuh can. Don'tcha get the idea that Soapy Caswell is ridin' yuh, son. I'm just tellin' yuh how the voters stand. Right now you'd carry Silverton, cause they remember the grizzly. T'morrow they quit thinkin' bear."

Brick nodded. He knew that Soapy was right. Sun Dog County wanted a sheriff to do things right now. Past performances did not count.

"Have you got any idea, Soapy?" asked Brick.

"Not a danged idea, Brick. From the three descriptions, there's a big man, a medium-sized one and one that's kinda tall and thin. Of course you've got to kinda discount descriptions, 'cause the human eye ain't no ways accurate after it's looked down the muzzle of a cocked gun. Anyway, I know danged well mine ain't."

"Would they nominate Hank Stagg and then elect him?" queried Brick.

"If they nominate him, they'll sure elect him. He wouldn't be worth a plugged dime as a sheriff, but that don't count now."

"Well," Brick yawned wearily, "I dunno as I care a lot, Soapy. I've had two years of misery for two hundred and twenty dollars per month. I suppose it would be kinda tough to go back to the old forty a month, punchin' cows."

"Now you get the idea out of yore mind," advised Soapy. "Sun Dog needs a reg'lar sheriff—not a — chilblain, like Hank Stagg."

"Soapy, do yuh think that Bill Grant, Hendricks and Leach will be nominated?"

"Leach don't have to—he's a hold-over, Brick. But I reckon Grant and Hendricks will be elected ag'in. They're as good as we can pick."

"They don't like me, Soapy."

"Well, my —, what do you care? Are yuh gettin' so that folks has to send yuh vil'lets?"

Brick laughed widely at the serious expression on Soapy's face.

"Listen, Soapy," he said softly, "they've hired a professional detective to come here to unravel our troubles."

"No! A—a—well, that's fine. I suppose

we'll have to take up a collection to send his body back to Iowa, or to some other —ed seaport. By golly, that's fine! Well—" Soapy cuffed his hat sideways on his head, and bit off a generous chew of tobacco—"that settles all our troubles. You can just set down and let him bring yuh the criminals.

"I wonder whose idea that was? Mebbe all three. By —, if their combined brains were turned into dynamite and loaded into a .22 shell, it wouldn't have power enough to kick the bullet out of a two-inch barrel. Professional detective, —! I'm goin' to find me a poker game, Brick. I crave action, I do. So-long!"



BRICK stood at the hitch-rack and grinned at Soapy, who was bow-legging his way across the street toward the Short Horn saloon. Sam Leach came out of the store, started to turn the other way, but noticed Brick and came over to him.

"You remember we spoke to you about that expert investigator the other day, Davidson?" said Leach.

Brick nodded slowly.

"He will be here almost any day now," continued Leach. "We told you this in strict confidence, and—well, we want you to keep the information to yourself. His value is gone, if his identity is known."

"Yeah?" Brick grinned.

"You can see that for yourself, can't you? He will probably go to work as a cow-puncher."

"He ought to be worth forty a month," mused Brick.

Leach scowled slightly. He had crossed verbal swords with Brick before, and he knew that the red-headed sheriff carried a sharp weapon in range-repartee. Brick looked up quickly.

"Seems to me that yo're takin' a — of a lot of interest in my office, Leach."

"Not in your office—in the good of the county, Davidson."

"Yeah? She was a pretty good county before you came here, Leach. Mebbe she'll be a good county after yo're gone."

"I don't think I understand you, Davidson."

"Don'tcha? Well, that's all right then. What yuh don't understand won't worry yuh none."

Brick turned and crossed the street to a

hitch-rack, where he mounted his horse and rode back toward Marlin City. Leach watched him ride away, shrugged his shoulders indifferently and walked down the street toward McGill's saloon.

Sam Leach had lived in Sun Dog County about four years and had prospered in his cattle buying. For nearly two years he had held office as a commissioner and had proved himself a capable man, although his disposition had gained him few friends.

He knew the cattle business well, having been a cowboy, cattle-raiser, and previous to his coming to Sun Dog he had been a range detective. He lived alone in a little house on the outskirts of Silverton, but spent a great part of his time in riding over the range, looking at the stock.

As Leach went down the street, Bill Grant came out of the livery-stable, where he had just left his horse, and crossed over to Leach. Jimmy McKeever, the stable-man, had told Grant of how Brick had saved Baldy Malloy's youngster.

"Hello," greeted Grant, "I guess I showed up too late to see the fun, eh? Did you see Brick ride the grizzly?"

"No, I didn't see it," replied Leach a trifle sullenly.

"Wish I had," laughed Grant. "Jimmy tells me that it was worth seein'. Brick's got plenty of nerve."

"Yes, that's a cinch."

"Hear anythin' more from that detective, Sam?"

"Not a word. But that don't bother me. Santel said he'd be here as soon as he could make the trip, and he'll be here."

"Good man, eh?" reflectively. "Yuh know we're kinda leavin' this up to you, Sam. I know that Brick didn't like the idea, and I don't know that I do. I had a talk with Hendricks—"

"Want me to send him back?" queried Leach, "—, I thought you fellows—"

"No, we'll let him go ahead, Sam. If he cleans up this gang, it will be fine. Still, I wonder if Brick—"

Two men were coming from McGill's saloon and Grant stopped with his question unasked. It was two of the men who had been there when Baldy had knocked McGill down. They were Bud Keller and Ed Smeed, two cowboys from over in the Smoky Hills.

"Did you fellers see it?" asked Keller, laughing.

"No, we got here too late," replied Grant. "Brick must have made a good ride."

"Oh, not that," laughed Smeed. "We didn't see that either. We meant, did yuh see Baldy Malloy knock McGill down?"

"Eh?" grunted Leach. "Knock McGill down?"

"Uh-huh. Baldy was comin' past, packin' his kid, when McGill asked Baldy what was goin' on up the street. Yuh see, we was all playin' poker and didn't know anythin' unusual was goin' on, until we hears the shots."

"Baldy was kinda excited and his eyes was like saucers, when he tells us how Brick saved his kid's life. Anyway, McGill makes a remark about Brick tryin' to make a hero out of himself, and then Baldy almost ruins McGill's nose. Honest to gosh, he laid McGill stiff."

"And," added Smeed, "if yuh meet Baldy, don't say nothin' ag'in Brick Davidson. I never knowed that that fat stage-driver had that kind of a wallop. Who-o-ee! He sure caressed McGill."

Grant laughed widely. He did not like McGill. But Leach did not see anything humorous in the incident.

"What did McGill do?" asked Leach.

"Aw, he spat out a tooth and soaked his smeller in cold water," grinned Keller. "It sure was right good to look upon."

"It must have been," said Leach dryly.

"C'mon up to the Short Horn, and I'll buy a drink," offered Keller.

"No thanks," Leach shook his head. "I'm going home."

"How about you, Grant?" queried Keller.

Grant grinned and started up the street.

"Just to show that I'm a hail-feller-well-met, c'mon."

Leach looked after them, a half-sneer on his face, and went slowly down to McGill's saloon, where he went inside.



TUNG-G-G, hung-g-g-g, bong-g-g, bong-g-g-g, zung-g-g-g.

Mrs. Wesson lifted her head from the pillow and strained her ears, trying to figure out what was making the peculiar noise. She had been listening to it for quite a while. It was a weird noise, half-metallic, half-human.

She reached over to a chair, where an alarm clock ticked loudly, and, in the dim light, took note of the time.

"Four o'clock," she said aloud.

"Eh?"

Cale Wesson, her husband, lifted himself on one elbow and squinted at her.

"Whazzamatter?"

"That danged noise," she replied. "Didn't yuh hear it?"

Cale yawned audibly and turned his pillow over. He was not interested.

Hung-g-g, bong-g-g, zung-g-g-g, zung-g-g bong-g-g-g.

"What the — is that?" demanded Cale, sitting up in bed.

"That's what I've been talkin' about," said Mrs. Wesson. "I've been hearin' it for quite a while. Sounds like a tight wire in a wind."

"Um-m-m."

Cale slid out of bed and went to a window. The sounds seemed to come from almost directly below them.

"It's sure got me," declared Cale. "I'm danged—"

"I care not for the star-r-r-rs that shi-i-ine."

The voice was singing softly, unmusically; dwelling with fervor and longing upon the higher registers.

"I only ho-o-ope that you'll be-e-e mi-i-i-ine."

Cale Wesson slid the window up softly and looked down.

Harp Harris was sitting against a corner of the porch, his face lifted in the moonlight, eyes closed, as he poured out his soul in his own kind of melody—

"I only know I lo-o-o-ove you-u-u-u;

Love me-e-e-e and the wor-r-r-rld is mi-i-i-i-ine."

The last wailing note died away. Cale Wesson turned and looked at his wife. Mrs. Wesson was a big, raw-boned woman, with a sense of humor, and just now the curl-papers on her head were jerking from excess mirth.

She shoved Cale aside and leaned out of the window.

"Harp!" she called softly.

"Eh?" Harp's eyes opened and he gasped up at the window above him.

"You ought to go home and git some sleep," said Mrs. Wesson.

"Huh?" Harp's vocal cords creaked slightly.

"We like yore music," said Mrs. Wesson seriously, "but Cale's got to have sleep, if he's going to run a store. Pers'nally, I kinda like it. Yuh better try it ag'in some night when Cale ain't at home."

"Uh," replied Harp.

He stepped off the porch, as if to sneak away, but summoned up a little nerve.

"Ain't Miss Miller to home?" he asked. "I—I told her I was goin' to serenade her sometime, yuh know."

"Gosh, I thought yuh was serenadin' me." Mrs. Wesson was sadly serious. "Well, I s'pose I should have known better. Nope, Miss Miller ain't home, Harp. She went to Silverton to a dance last night."

"Uh-huh? She did? Who'd she go with?"

"Mister Leach."

"Oh! Well, I'm much obliged, Mrs. Wesson."

"No, yuh ain't, Harp; but it's the best I can do for yuh."

"Sa-a-ay!" Cale Wesson's voice rasped out angrily. "What in — do yuh mean by singin' love songs around my winder at this time in the mornin'? I've got a danged good notion——"

"No, yuh ain't got no notion," retorted Mrs. Wesson. "You never had any kind of a notion. You let the boy alone."

The window slammed down, cutting off the argument. Harp put the offending instrument in his pocket and went back to the deserted street, where he slouched despondently along the sidewalk.

"Gone t' Silverton with Leach, eh?" he muttered aloud. "And me wastin' m' melody on the Wesson fambly. My ——! Now, everybody in town will know about it. —— Sam Leach!"

Miss Miller was the new school-teacher in Marlin City, a tall, angular sort of girl; rather good-looking and with a pleasant disposition. She boarded and roomed with the Wesson family, which place, according to Mrs. Wesson, "was gittin' to be a cow-puncher's headquarters."

Harp Harris had been fancy free until he had seen Della Miller. But in one month, Dan Cupid had riddled his heart with arrows of love; ruined his perspective, until he lost all track of time. Hence the four A.M. serenade.

He sat down on the sidewalk in front of the sheriff's office and held his chin in his hands, while he mentally picked a quarrel with Sam Leach. It was a dandy quarrel, ending in a fight, in which Harp beat Sam Leach to within an inch of his life.

There was also a big audience, cheering Harp on to kill his opponent, but Harp spared his miserable life. He did not want Leach's blood on his head. Anyway, he could

afford to be generous. The crowd was cheering him now. Crowds are peculiar things.

Then he hugged his elbows to his sides and started the argument all over again. This time it was man to man, but with guns. The crowd had scattered. It was a tense moment. Harp knew that he was quicker on the draw, a better shot than Leach.

"Pull yore gun, Leach," he said calmly. "Cock it, if yuh wish. Are yuh ready, Leach? All right. I'm givin' yuh an even break. Now, you give the word yourself."

And as the hero waited for the signal that would cause him to draw swiftly and send shot after shot into the heart of his hated rival, a horse and buggy came into town.

Harp lifted his head and watched Sam Leach drive past him, with Della Miller beside him. They turned off the main street, going toward Wesson's house. Harp spat angrily and tried to conjure up another big fight, but the spell was broken.

In a few minutes Leach drove past him again, went into the livery-stable and was gone for some time. Harp knew that the stableman was asleep and that Leach would have to stable his own horse. After a time, Leach came out, leading a saddle-horse, which he mounted. It was still too dark to distinguish objects clearly. Leach lighted a cigar or cigaret and rode slowly up the street, going past Harp once more and heading North.

Harp thought that Leach might be going back to the Wesson house, but he continued out of town.

"In that last fight," said Harp to himself, "I let him draw and cock his own gun. Huh! In that fist-fight I let up on him, when I had him where I wanted him. But if I ever get at him ag'in he's got to look out for himself. Bein' a hero is all right, but I'm all through heroin' around that danged jigger, y'betcha."

Harp went into the office and sat down on his cot. Brick was asleep in the back room, so Harp went cautiously. He knew that Cale Wesson would spread the news and that everyone in Marlin City would be informed of the fact that Harp Harris had serenaded Mrs. Wesson at four A.M.



BRICK awoke at eight o'clock and found Harp fully dressed. It was not like Harp to be up and doing at that time in the morning. He had left Harp in a poker-game in the Dollar Down

at midnight, and took it for granted that the game had just broken up.

Cale Wesson was just opening his general merchandise store as they went up the street to the restaurant. Cale saw them coming, and began a clumsy imitation of a troubadour. Brick squinted at him, wondering what it was all about; but Harp knew.

Cale pointed his nose toward the sky and began singing in a voice that was even worse than the one owned by Harp Harris—

"I care not for the sta-a-ars that shi-hine."

Cale paused and seemed to be searching for the proper note.

"Well, tha'sall right," observed Brick. "I never had much use for stars that shine either. I like mine kinda dim, Cale."

Harp's ears were very red, his jaws shut tight. Brick glanced at him curiously, but Harp remained silent.

"What's the idea, Cale?" queried Brick.

"Li'l love-bug, Brick. I can't tell yuh much more, 'cause I don't want no scandal in my own family. Me and Ma has been married seventeen years; livin' peaceful-like with nothin' to mar our happiness—but things are changin'. Ma's romantic. I s'pose—" Cale yawned widely, seriously—"I s'pose I've got to learn to play some—ed instrument and lose a lot of sleep, playin' and singin' beneath her winder—or take a chance on losin' her."

"Oh, yeah," Brick grinned widely, but did not look at Harp. "Well, good luck to yuh, Cale. If yuh want to learn the jew's-harp, I can put yuh next to a master of the thing. C'mon, Harp."

They went to the restaurant and ordered breakfast. Harp was silent and thoughtful, but Brick did not question him. Cale had told enough for Brick to have a fair idea of what had happened.

As they came out of the restaurant they met Mrs. Wesson and Della Miller. Harp stood stock-still and wished himself miles away, because at a glance he knew that Mrs. Wesson had told the school-teacher all about it.

"Hello, Brickie," greeted Mrs. Wesson.

"Hello, folks," grinned Brick.

Mrs. Wesson squinted at Harp, frowned heavily, as though trying to remember him. Then:

"By golly, that's Harp Harris, ain't it?"

"Yeah," nodded Brick, "this is Harp him-

self. You've met these ladies, ain't yuh, Harp?"

Harp grunted something unintelligible.

"Wouldn't hardly knowed him," declared Mrs. Wesson. "Yuh see, I ain't used to seein' him in daylight."

She turned to Miss Miller—

"This is Mister Harris, Miss Miller."

"Aw-w-w, dog-gone it, I've met yuh and—and I—I—" Harp stammered to a stop, his face red.

"I think I have met Mr. Harris," smiled the school-teacher.

"That's right!" exclaimed Mrs. Wesson.

"Come to think of it, yuh have. Why don't you boys come over and see us once in a while? We like company. Come over any evenin'. Harp can bring his music along and entertain us."

"Oh, do you play, Mr. Harris?" asked Miss Miller.

"Does he play?" Mrs. Wesson seemed surprised that the girl should ask such a question. "Does he? He not only plays, but he sings. Sings and plays his own accompaniment on a jew's-harp. Writes his own stuff, too, don'tcha, Harp?"

"Aw-w-w, for gosh sake!" Harp swallowed heavily and looked around for a place to put his hands.

"Well, we must be going along," said Mrs. Wesson. "Pleased to have seen you in daylight, Harp. Come and see us, won't yuh?"

"Sure be pleased to," grinned Brick.

The two ladies went on down the street and Harp heaved a sigh of relief.

"Now," said Brick grinning, "what happened, Harp?"

"Aw, —!" Harp shoved his hands deep in his pockets and glared at the sidewalk. "I forgot what time it was, Brick; and like a —ed fool, I—I—"

"You tried to serenade Miss Miller, eh?"

"Yeah. She wasn't home either. I woke up Cale and his wife."

"My —! Didja sing?"

"Yeah."

"Uh-huh. Where was Miss Miller?"

"She went to a dance at Silvertown, with Sam Leach."

"Tha'sso? With Sam Leach, eh? Well, don't let that worry yuh. She'll soon find out that he can't neither sing nor play."

"Brick," Harp's voice was strained, "are you tryin' to be funny?"

"Not intentionally, cowboy. Miss Miller

is educated and she's bound to recognize talent. I could tell by the way she was lookin' at yuh that she admires yuh a heap. In fact, she had tears in her eyes. By golly, that's appreciation. And she ain't even heard yuh yet."

"Yeah, I know all about them tears," snorted Harp. "Mrs. Wesson told her what happened."

"Well," hopefully, "mebbe they was tears of sympathy, Harp."

"Like —! I suppose I'll never hear the last of this. What do we do today, Brick?"

"I dunno. I've got a danged good notion to ride up to the Red Hill mine today. I want to have a little talk with Barney Devine. He might have an idea, and I haven't seen him since that holdup. Want to go along?"

"Yeah, I'd like to."

Harp was willing to go anywhere. He wanted to get out of Marlin City.

"All right. We'll bust out of here about noon, Harp."



IT WAS about eleven o'clock when the stage came in from Silverton, on its way to the Red Hill Mine. Little Whizzer sat beside Baldy on the driver's seat, as proud as a peacock. It was several days since the grizzly episode, during which time Baldy had taken the child with him everywhere. It was a new experience for Whizzer.

Baldy shook hands with Brick, who picked Whizzer off the seat and carried him into Wesson's store after candy.

"Where's yore spur?" asked Brick, noting that Whizzer was not wearing it.

Whizzer removed the candy long enough to gasp for breath and inform Brick that—

"I ain't no puncher now. Stage drivers don't wear spurs."

"By golly, that's my mistake," laughed Brick. "I'm sure an ignorant jigger."

"Yeah," nodded Whizzer seriously, much to Harp's delight.

He put the boy back on the seat and waved his hat at him, as they swept out of town. It was about two hours later when Brick and Harp saddled their horses and headed north.

It was eighteen miles from Marlin to the Red Hill mines. For a greater part of the distance the road followed the cañon, but about five miles from the mines it led to higher ground, winding along the sides of

the mountain, where, as Brick expressed it, "a driver is only allowed one mistake."

As they rode out of the cañon and began climbing, a rider came into view, coming down the grade. He was a medium-sized man, possibly forty years of age, slightly stooped in his saddle.

He drew up at their approach, removed his sombrero to wipe his forehead, disclosing a mop of tow-colored hair. His face was bony of contour, nose slightly crooked. Neither Brick nor Harp had ever seen the man before, but there was something familiar about him—a resemblance to some one they had known.

He was wearing a faded blue shirt, nondescript vest, chaps that were heavy with nickel and brass trimmings, matching the design on his cartridge-belt and holster. The horse was a tall, powerfully built sorrel.

"Is this the road to Marlin City?" he asked.

"Y'betcha," nodded Brick. "Stay on it and you'll hit Marlin."

"Good! By golly, I've been on so many wrong roads that it'll sure be a surprise to hit the right one once. Say, have yuh got any smokin'?"

Brick handed him a package.

"Gosh, that's fine, stranger. I tried to buy some Durham back at that mine, but they didn't have any. I reckon them hon-yocks all chaw or snuff. Much obliged."

He handed back the package, but Brick shook his head.

"You keep it. You'll need another smoke soon."

"Well, all right—thanks."

He put the package into his pocket, and his eyes squinted at the sheriff's star on Brick's shirt.

"Sheriff, eh?" he queried.

"Uh-hub," smiled Brick. "We have to carry our label—like a can of tomatoes."

"Or a box of dynamite," added the stranger dryly. "Well, I reckon I'll be driftin' on. Much obliged for the tobacco, sheriff. *Adios.*"

Brick and Harp nodded and rode on up the grades. At the top of the long climb they drew up their horses and looked back. The stranger was but a tiny speck, moving slowly down the cañon.

"Didja ever see him before, Brick?" queried Harp.

"Nope. But there's somethin' about him that reminds me of somebody."

"Me too," nodded Harp. "I ain't got the slightest idea who he looks like though. Sure wears a fancy lot of leather. I hate to see a feller hammer his chaps full of rivets that-a-way."

They rode on along the narrow grades and drew up at the Red Hill mine office. Barney Devine, a slight, hatchet-faced, nervous sort of a person, met them at the office door and greeted them effusively.

"How's tricks, Barney?" asked Brick, stretching his legs in one of Barney's comfortable chairs and accepting a cigar.

"Pretty good," replied the mine superintendent. "Everything is going along pretty fine. Property is getting richer all the time. We just cut a new vein that runs pretty high. How is everything in Marlin City?"

"So, so. Nothin' much new goin' on."

"I heard about you and the grizzly," smiled Devine. "Baldy Malloy sure told everybody about it. He seems to think it was the greatest thing that was ever done."

"It was fun while it lasted," smiled Brick.

"It must have been." Devine shook his head. "Some folks have queer ideas of fun. Anyway, what brought you up here, Brick?"

"Oh, just to see if you had dried up and blowed away yet. You get thinner every day, Barney."

"I knew that was why you came," said Barney dryly. "But that wasn't all, was it?"

"Just a little information," confided Brick. "How much did that hold-up nick you, Barney?"

"Thirty-eight hundred dollars."

"Uh-huh. How often do you ship by stage?"

Barney shook his head slowly.

"Not any more. Anyway, nobody will know when we do."

"Who knew about this shipment?"

"Not a darned soul, Brick. Baldy Malloy carries one of those old treasure-boxes for small packages. I gave him this box and told him to deliver it to the bank at Silver-ton. It was just a plain wooden box, with the cover just nailed on. There wasn't a thing to indicate what was in it."

"Whole thing would weigh about fourteen or fifteen pounds, wouldn't it? And it was consigned to the bank?"

"Yes. If the stage was held up the robbers would probably investigate that old treasure-box. But how do you suppose they knew when it was to be shipped?"

Brick shook his head.

"That wasn't the first shipment you've made, was it?"

"No. But there was no schedule, Brick. We shipped when it was ready."

A man came into the office and deposited a suit-case on the floor. It was one of the office men and Devine introduced him to Brick and Harp. Devine glanced at his watch.

"Baldy will be getting out of here rather late, if he don't hurry," observed Devine.

"He's usually on time," replied the man. "Anyway, I can't get a train out of Marlin until near midnight."

"Goin' for a trip?" asked Brick.

"Going to Frisco. My folks live there. I've been here at the mine for almost two years without a vacation; so I think it is about time to see the old folks."

"That's right," smiled Brick. "I wish I could see mine. Goin' out on the stage, eh?"

"It it ever shows up."

"It it ever shows up?" parroted Brick. "Hasn't it been here?"

"Not today."

Brick and Harp stared at each other. They could hardly believe that statement.

"Why, it went through Marlin City about eleven o'clock," stated Brick.

"And we just came over the road," added Harp wonderingly.

"Well, it never came here, that's a sure thing," declared Devine.

"The little kid was with Baldy," said Brick, getting to his feet. "What do yuh reckon has happened to 'em?"

"I don't see how anything could happen to them."

Brick strode to the door, but turned to Devine.

"Barney, was there a stranger here today—a man on a tall sorrel?"

"Yes. He wanted to buy some Durham tobacco, but we didn't have any. He didn't say who he was, but he did say that he picked the wrong road."



BRICK and Harp mounted and rode out of the camp, heading back toward Marlin City. They rode at a swift gallop, with Brick riding at the outer edge of the grades, watching the road closely.

There were many sharp curves, where they were forced to slacken their pace; but only long enough to obviate the danger of running into some one coming toward them.

About three miles from the mines, Brick jerked his horse to a stop and dismounted. Harp whirled and rode back to him, peering down the steep side of the hill, where the underbrush grew in a tangle among the tall timber.

"Here's where they went over," said Brick rather shakily, pointing at the wheel tracks, which had cut deeply into the outer edge of the road.

They could see where the stage had torn into the dirt of the side-hill, like the gash of plow-shares.

"My ——!" gasped Harp. "They tore plumb down through that brush! I'll betcha they went clear to the bottom of the cañon."

They dropped their bridle-reins and began the descent. The going was rough and the hill so steep that they were forced to cling to the rocks and brush. Down they went through the brush, following the marks of the stage.

A smashed wheel, driven into the side of a pine-tree, was the first evidence of the crash. Then a dead horse, upside down in a tangle of laurel, its harness stripped from its body. Beyond that was another horse and the wreck of the stage. It had turned over and crashed into a tree, splintering the body. There was no sign of the other two wheels.

Brick and Harp stood silently, gazing at the wreckage.

"Good ——, what a smash!" breathed Brick. "They must have fell two hundred feet. C'mon."

They moved down to the stage. Just beyond it, huddled in a bush, they found Baldy Malloy. His clothes were almost torn from his body, and it did not take an expert to tell that Baldy had made his last trip.

"Poor ——," said Brick sadly. "He stayed with her until they hit the tree. But where is Whizzer?"

"That's right," nodded Harp. "The kid was with him."

They separated and began their search. Twice they combed every inch of ground between the stage and the grade. They went far down in the cañon below the stage, searching closely for any sign, but there was nothing to show that the little boy had wandered down the hill.

After two hours of determined search, Brick sat down and admitted himself beaten.

"He just ain't here, Harp."

"He ain't," declared Harp. "By golly, we've sure looked over every inch of this mountain. But where in —— is he?"

Brick wiped his brow and shook his head.

"That's the queer part of it, cowboy. He must be—and ain't. We'll pack old Baldy up to the horses and take him to town. It's barely possible that Whizzer wasn't hurt, and that he got back to the grade and headed for town."

"That's right," agreed Harp hopefully. "By jinks, that's right."

It was a big task to get the body up to the grade, and both men were tired out, when they swung onto their horses, with the body on Brick's saddle. They were unable to travel fast, but they did not overtake Whizzer. There were no tracks from his little feet in the dusty road, and Brick's eyes squinted painfully as he visualized the little fellow wandering alone in that deep cañon, looking for a way out.

Their arrival caused a sensation in Marlin City. Brick turned the body over to Doctor Meyers and went back to the Dollar Down saloon, where he told them about the missing boy. There were several men there who had seen the boy with Baldy that day, and in about thirty minutes a group of twelve riders, including Harp, Brick and Silent Slade, were heading back for the scene of the wreck.

Several of them carried lanterns, and there were enough blankets along to wrap up a dozen children. Even Le Blanc, the blacksmith, borrowed a horse and went along. It was almost dark when they arrived, and in a short time there were lanterns bobbing around the timbered sides of Elk Cañon, as the men searched in every possible and impossible place.

Some went far down into the bottom of the cañon, while the others examined places far to the sides of where the stage had been wrecked. It was almost daylight when the last of the searchers arrived at the grade, tired and discouraged.

"By gosh, she's not be here!" panted Le Blanc. "Not'ing on de hill. H'even de brush is clear h'off. I'm h'even dig a little."

They mounted their horses and rode back toward Marlin City, with every man still straining his eyes for a sight of the boy. The women of the town were waiting for them, hoping that their search had not been in vain. Mrs. Wesson had a mighty pot of

coffee waiting for them and they attacked it with a will.

Doctor Meyers drew Brick aside and spoke softly—

"Has any one ever threatened Baldy Malloy, Brick?"

"Threatened him?" Brick gulped some strong coffee. "Not that I know of, doc. Why do you ask?"

"He was shot."

"Shot?"

"Yes. When Baldy Malloy drove off the Elk Cañon grade, he was dead, Brick. There was a bullet through his heart."

Brick's jaw set tightly and the hand that held the cup of coffee dropped to his side, spilling the fluid onto the floor.

"He was shot before he went off the grade, eh? Shot through the heart."

"Yes. It was either a revolver bullet, or possibly a rifle, fired at long range. The bullet was still in him, Brick. It is a .45 caliber."

Brick glanced quickly around. The men were busy with the coffee and none of them had heard what the doctor had told.

"Doc, can yuh keep this a secret?" queried Brick. "Mebbe we better let Harp in on it. Can yuh do this? It might be easier that-a-way."

"You are the sheriff," replied the doctor softly. "I am ready to do as you say. Every one thinks that Malloy accidentally ran off the grade. We can always exhume the body, you know."

"All right," nodded Brick. "And I'm much obliged, doc."

"That's all right, Brick. And there was no sign of the child?"

Brick shook his head wearily and went back after more hot coffee. Miss Miller and Mrs. Wesson were talking to Harp, who was too tired to even be bashful. But they were not joking him now.

The men gradually drifted away to get a few hours sleep before renewing the search. Brick, Harp and Silent went down to the office, with the intention of going to bed, but they had only been there a few minutes when Bill Grant came in, accompanied by the stranger who had met Brick and Harp on the road.

"Hello, Brick," greeted Grant. "I want yuh to meet Mr. Santel."

"I've met the sheriff before," grinned Santel. "In fact I owe him a sack of tobacco."

Brick introduced Santel to Harp and Silent.

"Can we talk to yuh alone for a few minutes, Brick?" asked Grant.

"Sure thing."

Brick grabbed his hat and followed them outside. They walked up the street a short distance and stopped.

"Mr. Santel is the man we told yuh about, Brick," said Grant.

"The detective?"

Santel smiled.

"Not exactly a detective. Leach seemed to think that I could kinda clean up some of the crime around here; so here I am."

"You with the Cattle Association, Santel?" queried Brick.

"No. I'm not connected with any outfit right now. The men in the association are too well known."

"I s'pose," nodded Brick thoughtfully. "Still yuh wasn't able to find the right road, yuh know."

Santel laughed softly.

"That's right, sheriff."

"Grant, you heard about Baldy Malloy, didn't yuh?"

Grant hadn't. He and Santel had just ridden in from Grant's ranch, the old Star-Dot, located about six miles due north from Marlin City, on Whispering Creek.

It did not take Brick long to tell of the wreck, the finding of Malloy's body and of their futile search for the youngster.

"Well, how in the — did Malloy happen to drive off the grade?" wondered Grant. "He was a good driver."

"I dunno," sighed Brick. "It was one awful smash-up."


"Was it back on those grades beyond where I met yuh?" asked Santel.

"Uh-huh. About the highest point."

"Where's the body?" asked Grant.

"Down at Doc Meyers' office."

"Let's go and look at it," suggested Santel.

 THEY walked down to the office and the doctor met them at the door. Malloy's body had been laid out on some planks, and a heavy sheet thrown over it. The doctor threw back the sheet enough to disclose the head, but not enough to show any of the body.

Santel stepped in close and peered at the face of the dead man. Brick noticed the muscles of Santel's jaw set tightly and the

blood quickly drained from his face. Grant was talking to the doctor and did not notice this.

For several moments Santel stared into the face of the dead man before he slowly drew back and turned away. Grant had stepped in closer and was looking closely. Then he grasped the sheet and drew it down, exposing the bare chest and arms.

"What the —— is this?" he grunted, turning to the doctor. "This man has been shot."

Santel whirled quickly and leaned forward, looking at the blue circle on the dead man's breast. Grant had turned and was staring at Brick and the doctor.

"We both knew it, Grant," said Brick slowly. "Somebody shot Baldy through the heart before he went off the grade; and we thought it might be easier to find out who done it, if it wasn't generally known that such a thing was done."

Grant squinted thoughtfully, half-nodding in agreement.

"He never knew what hit him," said the doctor softly. "It was a center shot."

"A forty-five," added Brick quickly.

Santel's right hand dropped to his holster, but jerked away.

"You shoot a forty-five?" asked Brick.

Santel's eyes slowly turned to Brick, a narrow-eyed stare and a slow nod.

"Yeah," he said hoarsely. "I shoot a forty-five."

"A lot of us do, Santel," said Brick slowly.

"Do yuh think it was a hold-up?" queried Grant.

"We won't know until we find out what Baldy was carryin' from Silverton."

"How long has he been driving this stage?" asked Santel.

"About seven or eight months, I think," replied Brick.

"What did he do before he got this job?"

"I dunno, do you, Grant?"

"No. I never seen Baldy until he started drivin' stage. Prob'ly the only job he ever had in Sun Dog."

"Have any enemies?" queried Santel.

"Never heard of any," said Brick. "Baldy was kind of an inoffensive jigger."

"Not exactly," Grant smiled slowly. "He knocked McGill down the day you rode the grizzly, Brick."

"I heard about that," smiled Brick.

"Still a poke in the nose wouldn't cause a man to go murder—not this long afterward, anyway."

"Who is McGill?" asked Santel.

"A saloon-keeper in Silverton. Not exactly a worthy citizen, but tolerated. No, I don't reckon that McGill shot Baldy."

They left the doctor's office and walked back to the street. Grant offered to buy a drink, but the other two men declined with thanks. Santel was very serious, and Brick thought very sad.

"Is Santel goin' to stay with you, Grant?" asked Brick.

They had halted in front of Wesson's store, and as Brick spoke Mrs. Wesson and Miss Miller came out of the store and walked past them. Brick and Grant spoke to the ladies. Miss Miller glanced keenly at Santel, but he did not pay them the slightest attention.

"Yeah, he is goin' to stay at my ranch," replied Grant, after the women were out of ear-shot. "I've hired him to punch cows."

"Well, he looks capable," grinned Brick.

Santel looked up quickly. He straightened his shoulders and shifted his heavy cartridge-belt slightly.

"Are they goin' to hunt for the kid again today?" he asked.

Brick nodded.

"Y'betcha. I've got to grab a little sleep. We'll probably pull out of here about noon. The boys were kinda fagged out, but they'll be on deck."

"I'll go along," volunteered Santel.

"Me, too," said Grant quickly. "By grab, I hope we find that poor kid. He was a dinger of a little feller, Brick—him and his spurs."

"He quit wearin' spurs," said Brick sadly. "He told me yesterday that stage-drivers didn't wear spurs."

"What was his name?" asked Santel.

"I dunno. Baldy called him 'Whizzer.'"

Santel looked curiously at Brick, his eyes narrowed to slits, as if looking into a strong light. Then he turned away and looked across the street.

"Well, you go and grab an eye-full of sleep, Brick," said Grant. "We'll be ready to ride when you show up."

Brick nodded and went back to the office. Harp and Silent were already stretched out on the two cots and were snoring a duet. Brick went into the back room and kicked off his boots. He was half-asleep before he stretched out on the bed, but his mind was running in wide circles.

"Who is Santel?" he asked himself. "Why

did he act that-a-way when he looked at Baldy Malloy?"

Brick yawned widely and drew the blanket up around his neck.

"I dunno how much of a detective he is," decided Brick, "but he's a gun-man, if there ever was one. Mister Santel, me and you may not travel well together, but I ain't goin' to choose you in case I'm lookin' for trouble. You're a salty son-of-a-gun, even if yuh do decorate yore leather panties with dude buttons; and if you don't mind I'd kinda like to be on yore side."



THE search for Whizzer Malloy was a failure. Several men came from Silverton and Barney Devine sent out a big crew from the Red Hill mine, but to no avail. Every inch of the big cañon and the mountains surrounding it had been explored, but there was not even a footprint to show where the little fellow had passed.

"She's not leave de track," declared Mose La Clede, who had joined the search. "Up de cañon 'bout mile be-ond where de stage go bus', I'm find de track of beeg griz-i-lee. By gosh, she may be so dat de griz-i-lee find her firs'."

"Aw, ——!" snorted Silent. "Even if a grizzly caught the kid, we'd sure find some evidence of it, Mose."

"I'm be not so —— sure. Griz-i-lee pick her up jus' like you pick up ol' hat. Dat —— bear she's strong. She's pick up de sheep—w'y not de leetle keed, eh?"

"Well," growled Silent, "you don't need to get such —— pleasant thoughts."

It was hard for the men to give up the search, but there was nothing else to do; so they went back to town. Santel had been with the searchers, as had Grant, Leach and Hendricks. Brick had told Harp and Silent who Santel was, and both of them, while they did not admire Santel, admitted that he looked able to take care of himself.

Hank Stagg hired another stage-driver in the person of Sidney Howley, who had formerly been a "swamper" in the Short Horn saloon. In other words, Howley had been employed to clean up the place.

Howley was an angular-built young man, with a bony face, long nose and lack-luster eyes; sort of a colorless person, with only enough initiative to roll cigarets and use a mop. Stage driving was not exactly a lucrative occupation, and perhaps Hank might

have been forgiven for adding Howley to his staff.

And, anyway, Hank was too busy electioneering to spend his valuable time in examining applicants for the position. From a word dropped here and there Brick felt that Sam Leach was behind Hank's campaign.

"Still there ain't nothin' funny about that," decided Brick. "Me and Hank and Sam all belong to the same political party—and Sam don't like me. Naturally he picks Hank."

"Well," remarked the philosophic Harp, "if yo're beat, mebbe I'll get a little rest. This here ——ed deputy job costs me a lot of sleep. And I've always got to be goin' around, lookin' like I knowed somethin', when I don't know a —— thing."

"There's a difference of sixty dollars a month between yore present job and punchin' cows," reminded Brick.

"Lot of difference in the sleep, too. By golly, I can go back to the old Nine-Bar-Nine and play m' jew's-harp unmolested, too."

"Nobody stoppin' yuh from moanin' it around here, is there?"

"Yeah—moanin'! By golly, you ain't got no appreciation for music, Brick. Moanin' ——! Yuh got to sing through it. How in —— do yuh expect me to play it, if I don't sing into it?"

"I don't expect yuh to play it, Harp. Nobody hankers for yuh to play it. Hang the thing up and let the wind play it."

"Uh-huh."

"Or go over and serenade Mrs. Wesson. She speaks highly of yore ability. I'd be ashamed to let Sam Leach beat me out of a girl."

"The —— you would? Well, he's beatin' yuh out of a job."

"I reckon that'll hold me for a while," grinned Brick.

Harp had got to his feet and was starting for the door, when Silent Slade came stomping inside. He advanced to Brick's desk and slapped a piece of fairly fresh cow-hide down on its polished top. It landed with a wet thud and the concussion knocked several papers to the floor.

"Get that dirty thing off my desk!" snapped Brick. "What do yuh think this is—a tannery?"

"Look at that!" snorted Silent, pointing at the offending object. "Look at that piece of hide, dog-gone yuh!"

"All right, I'm lookin'!" retorted Brick.

"Do yuh see it? Yuh do? See the Nine-Bar-Nine brand on that section of cow skin? See the edge has been burned? Yuh do? Huh!"

"Yeah, I see all them things," grinned Brick. "Why didn't yuh herd the cow in here? The sample looks all right."

"Funny, ain'tcha?" Silent poked his finger at the piece of hide carefully, as though expecting it to snap at him.

"Well, what's the joke?" asked Harp. "You've made a lot of medicine over that piece of eppy-der-mis. What was the matter with the old critter—have dandruff?"

"——'s delight!" roared Silent. "That's a Nine-Bar-Nine cow. Somebody killed it and burned the hide. But they missed on the important part of the thing. See where it was burnt?"

"Where did yuh find it, Silent?" queried Brick seriously.

Silent sat down and rolled a cigaret. He had excited their curiosity and now he was going to take his own sweet time in answering their question.

"Yuh hadn't ought to have asked him that, Brick," said Harp. "He prob'ly don't remember."

"Yeah?" Silent shaped his cigaret and scratched a match on the sole of his boot.

"I found that hide in Big Elk Cañon."

"Yo're the one that's tellin' the story," reminded Brick.

"I got to thinkin' about that poor little kid," stated Silent thoughtfully. "I knowed it wasn't no use lookin' for him after all this time, but I went anyway. I rode in close to the mouth of the cañon and took plenty of time. About a mile or so up the bottom I cut into one of them side gulches, kinda lookin' around."

"I seen horse-tracks and cow-tracks, and I got to figurin' that was why the grizzly was hangin' around the cañon. Pretty soon I runs onto the remains of an old fire. It's several days old, and right there I discovers a piece of cow-hide."

"It looks like it's been burned, don'tcha know. I turns it over with my foot, and that old Nine-Bar-Nine brand looks up at me. The ground is kinda hard, and I can't find no tracks, but I sure finds where an animal has been butchered."

"Somebody needed meat, eh?" mused Brick.

"That's all right," nodded Silent. "There

ain't nobody goin' to begrudge a hungry person a hunk of beef; but whoever killed that animal didn't set down there and eat it. They burned the hide, and took the rest of the animal away with them."

"Well," grinned Brick, "it was probably somebody that needed meat pretty bad. The loss of a cow won't break Lafe Freeman."

Silent shook his head slowly and blew rings at the ceiling.

"Nope," he said slowly. "Losin' one cow won't hurt him none, Brick. I don't reckon there's a man in Sun Dog that would yelp less over the loss of one cow. After I found that piece of hide I rode on up the cañon."

"There's half-a-dozen of them side gulches that come in from the west, and in most every one of them there's places where hides have been burnt. I tell yuh, Brick, somebody is grabbin' off a lot of slow-elk meat. I dunno whether it's all Nine-Bar-Nine stock or not—but one of 'em was, that's a cinch."

Brick frowned at his boot toes and shifted restlessly.

"Meat burglars, eh?" he said slowly. "My gosh, what a place to butcher! If yuh herd a cow into Big Elk Cañon she's yore meat."

"Cinch," agreed Harp. "A cow ain't goin' to climb out. She'd head into one of them side gulches and they ain't much more than blind cañons. I've been in there, but quite a while ago."

"I'm glad yo're interested," said Silent dryly. "When a sheriff takes up ridin' grizzlies and his deputy spends his nights serenadin' married wimmin, it's sure hard to interest 'em in such common things as rustlin' cows."

"If yuh don't like our stock of goods, yuh might go and see what Mister Santel has to offer," replied Harp.

"That hard-faced pelican!" snorted Silent. "I met him out there between here and the Star-Dot. He jist nodded and rode on."

"What did yuh expect him to do—kiss yuh?"

Silent made a dive for Harp and they went rolling across the floor in a grunting tangle, colliding with one of the cots, each one striving with muscle and voice to stay on top of the other. Silent finally managed to secure the advantage and proceeded to straddle Harp and bounce his head on the floor.

"Get smart with me, will yuh?" panted Silent.

"Leggo my ears!" yelled Harp. "Leggo, I tell yuh!"

"Get up, you two-year-olds!" snorted Brick. "What do yuh think this place is—a saloon?"

"Mind papa," chuckled Harp.

His indifference to the situation caught Silent off his guard and he managed, with a sudden twist of his body to dump Silent sidewise into the cot, and they both stumbled to their feet.

Harp made a feint to grab a chair and Silent ducked for the doorway; but Harp turned from the chair, grasped the piece of cow-hide off Brick's desk, and hurled it at Silent.

The piece of heavy, wet hide sailed like a blue-rock shot from a trap, missed Silent by two feet and stopped with a dismal *splat*, after it had passed through the doorway.

Silent ducked back inside, his mouth wide with astonishment, while from without came a vitriolic curse, and Sam Leach stepped just inside the door, wiping his face with the sleeve of his coat.

"Who in — hit me?" he demanded.

"Hit yuh?" queried Harp, choking back his laughter.

"Some — thing," Leach looked back, spitting angrily.

"Oh, it must 'a' been that piece of hide," said Harp slowly. "I throwed it outside. It—it was kinda spoiled, Leach."

"Um-m-m!"

Leach felt of his face and sniffed disgustedly. Then he whirled on his heel and went away, while the three men proceeded to relieve their feelings with tears.

"Hit him right in the mouth!" choked Silent. "*Ker-splat!*"

"I wonder what he was comin' here for?" panted Brick.

"He wasn't," Silent shook his head. "He was just goin' past. When I came to the door he kinda slowed up and looked at me—and that's when the old hunk of hide hit him dead center. Didn't yuh hear it *splat?*"

"Hear it?" chortled Harp. "Never heard sweeter music in my whole life. The only thing I'm sorry about is that I didn't hit him with the whole cow."

"And it didn't smell none too sweet," chuckled Silent. "He sure acted plumb dis-

tressed over it, and he'll likely be gunnin' for our little playmate, eh, Brick?"

"Tha'sall right," Harp grinned widely. "That jasper can't start trouble none too soon to suit me, by golly."

"They're rivals," Brick whispered to Silent. "Leach thinks that Harp is tryin' to beat him out of his girl. Harp don't want her a-tall."

"Certainly not!" thus Silent indignantly. "Harp ain't got no use for a girl. Why, he can't even support himself."

"The — I can't!"

Harp started for Silent, who ducked out of the door, heading for the Dollar Down, with Harp close behind him. Brick grinned and sat down in the doorway.

Brick knew that Sam Leach had gone to the Dollar Down, and that Harp and Silent had gone over there to have a drink and to sympathize with Sam Leach. Their sympathy would be with a reverse English, as usual. A couple of little kids were coming from school and behind them came Miss Miller, carrying an armload of books.

"When yuh teach the young idea how to shoot, you've sure got to pack a lot of ammunition, ain't yuh?" smiled Brick, as she came up to him.

"Yes indeed," replied the teacher, a trifle wearily.

"Let me pack them books," offered Brick, taking them from her. "I'll walk down and see Mrs. Wesson."

"But I can carry them," she protested.

"Sure yuh can—but not just now," grinned Brick.

They walked slowly up the street and were opposite the Dollar Down, when Harp and Silent came outside. The two cow-punchers stopped at the edge of the sidewalk and stared at Brick and the teacher. Brick grinned covertly. He could tell by their attitude that Harp and Silent were making uncomplimentary remarks about him.

A horseman was riding into town, heading for the rack at the Dollar Down. It was Santel. Miss Miller looked toward him and turned to Brick.

"Mr. Davidson, do you know that man?" she asked.

"Yes'm. His name is Santel."

"What is he doing here?"

"Well, I reckon he's workin' for the Star-Dot outfit, ma'am."

"For Mr. Grant?"

"Yes'm."

"Do you know anything about him?"

"No, ma'am—not a thing. Did you ever see him before?"

"Yes. It was about a year ago, I think—in Idaho. This man was mixed up in some cattle and sheep trouble. It seems that he was hired as gun-man by the sheep interests. Anyway, a couple of cowboys were murdered, and every one seemed to think that this man was the guilty party. But he left the country ahead of the sheriff."

"Tha'sso?" Brick was interested. "Are yuh sure this is the same man?"

"As sure as I can be. I have never met him, and he probably does not remember ever seeing me."

"Well, that kinda makes him worth watchin'," grinned Brick, as they went up to Wesson's porch. "You just kinda keep still about this will yuh, ma'am? It won't help none to scatter that kind of information; but I'm sure much obliged to yuh for tellin' me about it."

"You are certainly welcome, I am sure."

Mrs. Wesson opened the door. She had seen them from the window, but simulated great surprize.

"Heavenly dove!" she exclaimed. "Brick Davidson!"

"Lo, Mrs. Wesson."

Mrs. Wesson squinted at Miss Miller, shaking her head slowly.

"My, my! You girls sure do swing a wide loop. A new one every day. It wasn't that way in my time. Well, I reckon you can take a look at Cale Wesson and see that I didn't have much choice."

"I heard Cale say about the same thing one day," offered Brick innocently.

"Yuh did? Did that lantern-jawed—say, he picked me out of a whole herd. Ha, ha, ha, ha! Come on in, Brickie."

"Can't do it, Mrs. Wesson. I've got to go back now and square myself with Harp."

Miss Miller thanked Brick and went into the house.

"No sign of the little Malloy boy?" asked Mrs. Wesson softly.

Brick shook his head.

"No, I guess the kid is a goner, Mrs. Wesson. I don't *sabe* it at all. He was a dinger of a little feller. Kinda up and comin' all the time."

They considered the mystery silently for a while. Then:

"Well, I'll be goin'," said Brick. "There's a lot of work to bein' a sheriff."

"Like packin' schoolbooks and all that."

"Uh-huh," grinned Brick. "So long, Mrs. Wesson."

"G'-by, Brick."

Brick went to the Dollar Down, but did not find Harp and Silent. A poker game was in progress and Leach was in the game. Santel was one of the spectators. He nodded to Brick pleasantly, but not so Leach. He scowled at Brick and devoted the rest of his attention to his cards.

Brick went back to his office and found Silent and Harp, lying on the cots, reading some year-old magazines. Neither of them paid any attention to Brick, who rolled a cigaret and sat down on top of his desk.

"Miss Miller is a danged nice girl," offered Brick.

"Yeah?" Thus Harp sarcastically.

"Yeah. I don't care much for a girl that talks all the time about another feller."

"Who'd she talk about?" demanded Harp quickly.

"If you don't know, I'm not goin' to tell yuh."

"Leach?"

"Nope; never mentioned his name."

"Huh!" Harp arose and yawned widely.

"Is Mrs. Wesson at home?"

"I don't think so."

"I think you're a liar, Brick."

"Well, why don'tcha go and find out for yourself, Harp?"

Harp grinned and sauntered into the back room, from whence came the sounds of razor stropping and splashing water. Silent groaned aloud.

"You touch my red tie and I'll massa-cree yuh," warned Brick.

"Where do yuh think I'm goin'—to a bull-fight?" spluttered Harp. "I've got a green one."

"You must have," observed Silent meaningly. "She must have astigmatism, too."

Silent sneaked softly out and Brick went out behind him, while Harp swore softly and searched for something to throw at them.



THE following day Brick rode through Big Elk Cañon alone. He found plenty of evidence that cattle had been butchered, but was unable to find anything that would show who owned the animals nor who had done the killing.

It was well past noon when he arrived at the Red Hill mine and found Sam Leach and Hank Stag in Barney Devine's office.

They were all smoking cigars, and a half-empty whisky bottle was on the table. Brick knew that Hank Stagg was electioneering.

The men were all civil enough, but Brick knew that Leach and Stagg were not at all pleased at his appearance.

"How's the sheriff?" queried Hank Stagg thickly. Hank had imbibed much of his own liquor.

"He's just about right," grinned Brick.

"It's a good thing that he thinks well of himself," observed Sam Leach sarcastically.

"'Cause nobody else does, eh?" grinned Brick.

"You said it yourself," reminded Leach, helping himself to a drink.

Brick laughed and stretched his legs.

"There's no use of quarrelin', Leach. You don't like me, and I sure hate — out of you; so let's let it go as it lays."

"What'd I ever do to you?" demanded Leach.

"Some folks don't have to do anythin' to me," said Brick coldly. "I'm not that particular."

"Aw, let's be friends," suggested Hank Stagg. "Have a drink, Brick. There ain't none of us perfect. Sam has had too many shots out of the old bottle today, and it's kinda soured on him."

But Brick grinned and declined the drink. Sam got to his feet and picked up his hat.

"You don't mind if we go and talk to some of the men, do yuh, Devine?" he asked.

"Go to it," smiled Barney. He had imbibed enough to make him feel kindly toward every one.

Hank corked the bottle, shoved it into his hip-pocket and followed Leach outside, where they headed for the mine bunk-house. Devine laughed and held out a handful of cigars to Brick.

"Might as well smoke on Hank Stagg, Brick. I've tried five of 'em, and not one will draw. But that hooch has authority."

Brick accepted one, lit and discarded it in a moment for a cigaret.

"What's on your mind?" queried Barney.

"You use a lot of meat don'tcha, Barney?"

"Darned right we do. You can't feed a crew like we've got and not use a lot of fresh meat."

"Who do yuh buy from?"

"Hm-m-m." Barney frowned thoughtfully, reached for a book and skipped through the pages. "Here it is—Mostano; J. Mostano. I think they call him Joe."

"Joe Mostano, eh? He's that 'breed back on Lick Creek. Bought out that old Hopper ranch, didn't he? Brands with a big H. Covers half the animal."

"I don't know," replied Barney. "Art Fields runs the commissary and takes care of the buying. You got some beef to sell, Brick?"

Brick shook his head and got to his feet.

"I wonder if I could have a little talk with Fields?"

"Sure thing. He's in that big building on the other side of the cook-shack. You know him?"

"Nope, but I can find him."

"I'll go with you."

Barney got his hat and they walked to the commissary building. Hank Stagg and Leach were talking to several men near the bunk-house. Leach said something to the men, which caused them to laugh.

Art Fields was a little, fat man, with an almost totally bald head and a serious face. He shook hands with Brick and waited for him to state his business.

"Yes, we buy from Mostano," he said, in answer to Brick's question. "He has been supplying us with beef for several months. It is cheaper than having it freighted in. Mostano packs it in on his horses. His ranch is only about six miles from here, I think."

"Is it good meat?"

"Fine."

"Does he bring the hides with it?" asked Brick.

"The hides? Why, I don't think so. We don't buy hides."

"Sure yuh don't," grinned Brick, "but it's a law, Fields. When yuh sell meat that-a-way you've got to show the hide."

"Oh-h-h, I get the idea." Fields looked very wise. "I never thought of that, sheriff. Why, sure, it would be easy to kill somebody's cattle and sell 'em to us. I don't know whether Mostano knows about this or not, but I'll see that he does. Next time he shows up, he better have the hide."

"Has somebody been killing cattle?" asked Barney softly.

"I don't think so," smiled Brick. "I got to thinkin' about you havin' to buy so much meat, and I thought yuh ought to know what the law was. It might save yuh trouble."

"That's right," agreed Barney. "We want to stay inside the law, you bet."

"I guess that Mostano is all right," said Fields. "He seems to be a pretty good 'breed, and he is sure prompt on delivery. He will bring in a load tomorrow some time."

"Well, I'm much obliged," smiled Brick. "See yuh later."

"Come any old time."

Brick and Barney walked back toward the office, and met Hank and Sam Leach, who were coming toward the commissary.

"Land any converts?" asked Brick.

"Got a lot of promises," grinned Hank drunkenly. "Thish here polit'cal business is hard on the stummick."

"Aw, come on!" snorted Leach.

"Foller papa," laughed Brick.

Leach snorted and started to say something, but evidently changed his mind. A man was riding in on a pinto horse and Barney called Brick's attention to him.

"That's Mostano, Brick."

The rider was of medium height, rather heavy, sitting humped in his saddle, his face completely shaded by a wide sombrero. He rode around the corner of the cook-shack, heading toward the commissary building. Brick stopped and looked back.

"I reckon I'll go back there, Barney," he said. "I'd kinda like to get a look at Mostano."

Brick started back and Barney went with him. They stopped at the corner of the building, where they could hear the men talking. It was evident that an argument had started, in which Hank and Leach had joined.

"It's none of my business," said Fields, "but it's the law. You've got to have the hide of the animal, Mostano. I didn't know it until the sheriff told me about it today."

"Aw, to — with the sheriff," thus Sam Leach. "Let's all have a drink. Fields, I want you to meet Hank Stagg. Hank is our next sheriff."

Fields grunted an acknowledgment.

"Why do I bring hides?" queried Mostano. "My meat is good."

"I'm not kicking about the meat," replied Fields. "I'm just telling you—"

"Nobody pays any attention to that law," interrupted Leach. "It's a law all right, but what the —? We've got too many laws."

"Hides make big load," complained Mostano. "I have to pack one more horse. Too much work."

"That's right," agreed Leach. "Here, have

a drink, Fields. That —ed sheriff is too officious. Wait until Hank is elected."

There was silence while the bottle was being passed, and then Mostano's voice grew a trifle more belligerent.

"I no like to pack hides."

"All right," grunted Fields. "Take a chance, if you want to. You never know when the sheriff is going to pop up on you. It's your funeral—not mine."

"He don't come out here very often, does he?" asked Leach.

"I never met him until today. I may not be any judge of human nature, but I don't want him catchin' me breaking the law."

"Aw, he ain't so much," said Hank thickly.

"You better take your sheriff prospect and put him to bed," observed Fields laughing. "He's buckling at the knees."

"I no bring hides," declared Mostano.

Brick touched Barney on the arm and they walked back to the office. Brick was very thoughtful over what he had heard.

"That's what whisky does," said Barney. "Fields was all right, until he got that drink."

"Don't worry about him," smiled Brick. "He's just human. We'd all say the same thing, if we were in his place. Hank and Leach have the idea that whisky and cigars will bring votes. Maybe it would, if they could vote 'em right at the time. Well, I've got to be driftin', Barney. Don't say anythin' to Fields."

"It won't get him into trouble, will it, Brick?"

"No-o-o. Maybe it's better that way. So long."



BRICK mounted and went slowly down the road about a quarter of a mile, where he swung up the side of hill, heading northwest of the Red Hill property. A narrow hog-back ridge led back to the top of the hill, from where he could get a bird's-eye view of the big mine.

As he rested his horse he saw Mostano ride away from the mine, traveling in the same general direction as Brick was heading. Brick waited for Mostano to disappear in the timber before going on.

The ridge led back through fairly heavy timber, forcing him to travel slowly. About two miles from the mine he stopped. He knew that the old Hooper ranch was located about due north of where he was, and

that Mostano must cross that ridge on his way home.

In a few minutes he was rewarded by seeing Mostano ride up the side of the hill, cross the ridge about two hundred yards beyond him and ride down into the next cañon. Brick moved on and found the trail. He gave Mostano plenty of time before following him.

The trail led around the head of the next cañon, twisted down the opposite side and came out into more open country. There were several head of cattle on this side, and Brick noted that all of them were branded with the big H.

The trail led to the edge of a high bluff, where he drew rein. Below the bluff, about half a mile away, he could see the buildings of the old Hooper ranch, standing in the middle of a big, partly cleared meadow. But he could see nothing of Mostano now.

There was no sign of life about the place. The corrals were empty. Brick considered the place for quite a while. He was suspicious of Mostano. Whoever was killing the beef must have a ready market for meat. There were other big mining crews at Red-rock, but that was too far away for any one to transport the meat at a profit.

Finally he decided to take a closer view of the place; so he spurred down the bluff trail and rode boldly up to the old ranch-house. A half-breed woman came to the door, as he dismounted, shading her eyes from the sun. She was a slatternly looking woman, poorly dressed, bare of feet.

"Howdy," grinned Brick. "You Mrs. Mostano?"

"Um-m-m." She was not at all friendly.

"Where's Joe?" he asked.

She squinted at him and shook her head. A number of mongrel dogs came from behind the house and created a din with their barking. Brick slapped at them with his hat and they went yelping for cover. It was evident that Mostano had taught them their place.

"Nice dogs yuh got," offered Brick.

"Um-m-m."

"Me and you don't seem to be able to find things to talk about," grinned Brick. "Don'tcha get lonesome livin' up here?"

The woman squinted down at her bare feet and up at Brick.

"W'at you want here?" she demanded.

"I want to talk to Joe?"

"W'y you want Joe?"

"Mebbe I want to buy some cheap meat."

She considered this thoughtfully. Brick thought he had made an impression, but this was quickly dispelled by—

"I think you — liar."

Then she turned, stepped into the house and shut the door. Brick laughed and swung back onto his horse.

"Mebbe that's right, too," he chuckled. "My reputation must 'a' got here ahead of my winnin' personality."

He rode past the house and looked over the corrals. There was no sign of any one having butchered stock there, and Brick decided that Mr. Mostano must do the butchering in the hills. He was sure that Mostano had not come home, as there was no sign of himself nor of the pinto horse.

As he rode back past the house he noticed that the place commanded a fine view of the high bluff and trail. It would be impossible for any one to approach the ranch unseen in daylight from that direction.

At the top of the bluff he looked back, but there was no sign of any one moving around the house. He swung to the left, heading in almost a direct line toward Marlin City, taking a chance that he would be able to strike the Big Elk grades about where they sloped down onto the lower ground.

Brick had never been through that part of the hills, but felt that it would be easier than going back to the Red Hill mine. The timber was fairly heavy and that side of the hill was grown up with jack-pine and willows, making it rather difficult traveling.

He had just skirted a willow thicket and was looking for a good place to cross a rocky swale, when he caught a glimpse of a rider skirting the side of the hill about an eighth of a mile beyond him. The heavy cover made it difficult for him to catch more than a glimpse.

Brick drew his horse into the cover of a willow bush and waited. His sorrel horse blended in well with the colors of the hillside, and he was curious to know who this rider might be.

But try as he might he could not locate him again. He felt that the rider was not coming toward him, because it would be impossible for a horse to travel silently. He scanned the hills in all directions. There was something further up on the hill—something that moved.

"Prob'ly a cow," said Brick to himself. "That jigger couldn't 'a' got up there that quick."

Then came the smashing report of a gun. The echoes clattered from hill to hill, dying away in diminishing echoes. Brick dropped out of his saddle, gun in hand. He had not heard the bullet. Whoever it was, they were not shooting at him.

Again the rifle awoke the echoes. Brick grinned to himself.

"Shootin' cattle," he told himself. "Somebody is killin' a load of meat for the Red Hill mine, and here's my chance to put the deadwood upon him."

There was no more shooting. Brick squatted on his heels and waited. He intended to give the man a chance to get busy on his butchering before making a search. He knew that this man might wait quite a while after his kill, to make sure that no one was going to make an investigation of the shots. Brick was a good waiter.

It was possibly fifteen minutes after the last shot had been fired, when Brick heard a noise. It came from below him, and sounded like the snapping of a dry stick. Brick's horse was well concealed by the willows from any one coming up the slope.

Just below Brick was a jack-pine thicket, growing up out of a tangle of rocks and old logs, and he studied this closely. One of the jack-pine tops jiggled, as if something had struck it slightly. Brick humped a little lower and drew back the hammer on his six-shooter.

Something was coming out through the thicket within ten feet of Brick. At first he thought it was a bear. Brick did not want trouble with a bear just now. A six-shooter is an unreliable bear weapon—and Brick was after bigger game.

Then the bear resolved itself into a man—Santel. He lifted his head slowly, his eyes searching ahead—and looked into the muzzle of Brick's six-shooter.

For several moments they looked at each other. Then:

"It's yuh, eh?" said Santel softly.

"Yeah," nodded Brick. "Yuh better let go that gun, Santel."

"I know it."

Santel sat up, leaving his gun on the ground, while Brick moved down and secured it. Then he sat down and they considered each other.

"Where's your rifle?" queried Santel. He

did not seem greatly concerned over his capture.

"I haven't any," replied Brick.

"No?" Santel wrinkled his nose thoughtfully. "No rifle? Huh! Yuh didn't kill my horse with a six-gun?"

"I didn't even shoot at your horse," declared Brick.

"No?" Santel's brows lifted slightly, and a grin twisted his lips. "Well, somebody did, sheriff. My horse is dead—neck broke."

"Yeah?" Brick's blue eyes squinted thoughtfully. "This must 'a' been a three-handed game, Santel. Just what are yuh doin' over here?"

"Just lookin'. No law against lookin' around, is there?"

Brick grinned and handed Santel his gun.

"Not a bit."

"Thanks," Santel holstered his gun.

"What was it all about?"

Brick shook his head. He was as much in the dark as Santel. He told Santel what he had seen, but he did not say that he was of the opinion that the shots were fired by a meat-thief.

Santel got to his feet and looked around. Brick walked back to his horse and picked up the reins.

"You ride a sorrel, too, eh?" remarked Santel thoughtfully. "My horse is a sorrel."

"Mebbe," said Brick seriously, "it was a good thing for me. We'll cache yore saddle and ride my horse double."

They found Santel's horse, unsaddled it and hid the saddle in the heavy foliage of a fir-tree. Santel studied the landmarks to get his bearings, mounted behind Brick and they headed for Marlin City.

"Have yuh got any idea who done that shootin'?" asked Santel.

"Not for publication," replied Brick. "Anyway, the county commissioners told me to let yuh alone, Santel. They said that yuh wouldn't need my help in findin' out things."

"Tha'sso?"

"Yeah, yo're supposed to be a regular finder, yuh know."

"I'm tryin' to find out some things, sheriff."

"Well," laughed Brick, "they can't expect to have yuh find out everythin'."

"They probably will be —ed sorry if I do."

"Oh, yeah," grunted Brick. "I'll betcha that's right."

But Brick hadn't the slightest idea what Santel meant.

They rode to the Star Dot ranch, where they found Hank Stagg and Sam Leach, sitting on the porch, talking with Bill Grant. Their coming, mounted on one horse, must have caused a certain amount of speculation in the minds of the three men, but no questions were asked.

Santel dismounted and held out his hand to Brick.

"I'm sure much obliged to yuh, sheriff," he said.

"Same here," smiled Brick.

"Get off and rest yore feet, Brick," invited Grant.

Brick shook his head and gathered up his reins:

"Not today, Bill, thank yuh. I'm kinda busy these days, lookin' after the morals of our feller-men."

"That's a good job for you," declared Sam Leach.

"Y'betcha. There's a lot of 'em that need lookin' after, Leach. I don't want to be personal, but I will say that there's a lot of loose cinches in this country, and if they ain't tightened up pretty quick—somebody's saddle is goin' to turn."

"Meaning what?" queried Leach.

Brick swung his horse around and headed for the gate, without answering Leach's question. In fact, he couldn't have answered it. He disliked Leach, and he knew that such a statement would rankle in Leach's bosom for quite a while.

That some one had mistaken Santel for him—Brick—was almost a certainty, Brick decided. Just what Santel was doing in that part of the hills, he had no idea. Brick had left the Red Hill mine and had ridden up the hog-back in full view of the mine. It was possible that Mostano had seen him and had tried to kill him.

It was not a place frequented by cowboys, and it would have been easy for Mostano to mistake Santel for Brick, as they were both mounted on sorrel horses. At any rate, thought Brick, Joe Mostano was worth watching.

Santel's statement regarding the county commissioners set Brick to thinking. Just what would it make them sorry for him to find out, he wondered? Miss Miller had recognized Santel as being a bad man—a gun-fighter. According to her, Santel had been a hired gun-man for the sheep inter-

ests, and had been suspected of murdering two cowpunchers in Idaho.

Brick was willing to discount the murder statement. He knew that, under those circumstances, an ordinary killing would be termed murder. Santel did not look like a murderer, but he did look like a gun-man, whose gun might be for rent.

"Well," Brick resolved, "I'm not goin' to worry about Santel. Mebbe between us we can kinda launder old Sun Dog and hang her out to dry in the sun. Anyway, somebody has fired the first gun of the battle—and all they got was a horse."



IT WAS several days later that Soapy Caswell came to Marlin City, driving a spirited pair of bronchos, hitched to a buckboard. He tied them at the Dollar Down hitch-rack and met Brick in front of Wesson's store.

"Goin' some place, or just got there?" queried Brick.

"If I wanted to go some place, I wouldn't stop here," grunted Soapy. "Don't like yore town. What do yuh think of that?"

"That's fine," grinned Brick. "Mebbe we better call a meetin' and let everybody grieve. What do yuh know, Soapy?"

"Danged little, Brick. Doin' any good for yoreself?"

"Not much."

"Uh-huh." Soapy lowered his voice. "Did that detective ever show up?"

"Been here quite a while, Soapy. Name's Santel."

"Tha'sso? I reckon I might as well expect to get all that stolen money back pretty soon, eh?"

"Yuh might as well expect to, Soapy."

"Gosh, that's fine! I'm all excited, like an old lady. It's too bad he wasn't here to find the little Malloy boy."

"He was here. He helped hunt for him, Soapy."

"Pshaw! Then he ain't no wizard, is he? Well, mebbe I won't get that money back. What are yuh doin' today, Brick? Anythin' special?"

"Nope."

"Then come and take a ride with me, will yuh? I've got to go out to the Red Hill mine and see Barney Devine, and I sure hate to travel alone. We'll be comin' right back. What do yuh say?"

"Well, all right, Soapy. I'll tell Harp that I'm goin'."

Brick went to the office, where he found Harp stretched out on a cot, groaning out an alleged tune on his jew's-harp.

"I'm goin' to Red Hill with Soapy Caswell" stated Brick. "If anybody tries to break into jail—stop 'em, Harp."

"Aw-w-w right. Leave me plenty of shells for the riot-gun and I'll sure keep the place sanitary. I've got a new tune, Brick. Listen to this, will yuh? It's a dinger. Wa-a-ait a minute!"

But Brick ducked out through the doorway and hurried up to the hitch-rack, where Soapy waited for him. Harp got up and went to the doorway, where he watched Soapy and Brick drive out of town.

Slim Hunter was dismounting in front of Wesson's store, so Harp wandered up there. Slim was talking to Cale Wesson about putting up an announcement in his store, when Harp came in.

"Hello, yuh long-gear'd ant-eater," greeted Harp.

"Same to you, you bat-eared cattywampus," grinned Slim. "How are yuh?"

"Finer 'n frawg-hair. Watcha doin', Slim?"

"Advertisin' a dance."

"Tha'sso? Where—Silverton?"

"Y'betcha. Next Friday night. Oyster supper, too. Goin' to have some reg'lar music, too, Harp. Yuh want t' be there."

"Friday night, eh?"

Harp was thinking fast. Here was his chance to take Miss Miller and he was not going to lose any time in asking her.

"See yuh later, Slim," he grunted, turning to the door. "I'm kinda in a hurry right now."

Harp went outside and headed for Wesson's home, going as fast as he could walk on high heels. Mrs. Wesson answered his knock, squinting at him quizzically.

"Miss Miller to home?" asked Harp.

Mrs. Wesson shook her head.

"No, she is still at the schoolhouse, Harp. She won't be home until after four o'clock."

"Uh-huh," Harp shifted his feet nervously. "There's goin' to be a dance at Silverton next Friday."

"So I heard."

"Yuh did? Who told yuh, Mrs. Wesson?"

"Why, Sam Leach was here kinda early this mornin' to ask Miss Miller to go with him."

"Oh, yeah," said Harp in a far-away voice, "Uh-huh. We-ell, I reckon they'll

have a real nice dance. Much obliged, Mrs. Wesson."

"I'm makin' some doughnuts," offered Mrs. Wesson, knowing Harp's fondness for such delicacies. But this was one time when Harp's sweet tooth had turned sour.

"Just as much obliged," he said painfully. "I've been havin' a touch of indejest-shun. Mebbe next time, thank yuh. Nice weather we're havin', Mrs. Wesson. Well, I'll be jiggin' along."

Mrs. Wesson stood in the doorway and watched Harp go back to the street, walking dejectedly. She tried to laugh, was a failure; so she went back to her kettle. Harp went back to the street and headed for the Dollar Down.

His soul was sore within him and he needed a bracer. Slim Hunter had given the bartender one of the notices to put on the back-bar, and Harp gazed upon it with sad eyes.

"Drinkin' anythin'?" queried Slim.

"Yeah—anythin'," replied Harp sadly. "My stummick is kinda antegodlin', and mebbe a shot or two will fix her up."

They had a drink on Slim, one on Harp and then the bartender opened his heart enough to shove out the glasses. After these three drinks, Slim began to dilate upon the wonders of the coming dance.

"Naw, I don't want to listen to it," declared Harp sadly. "If you've got any tale of sufferin'—tell it to me, Slimmie. My soul is in the slough of despond. Stummick trouble sure does paint things blue."

"You ought to do somethin' about it," stated Slim. "Feller like you ain't got none too many insides; so yuh got to protect what yuh have got. Mebbe another drink, eh?"

"Yuh sure diagnose, cowboy," applauded Harp.

But liquor only served to make Harp more sad. He became maudlin in his grief, trying to tell the story of his life and only remembering some sad stories he had read. His grief affected Slim, and they cried crocodile tears on the top of the bar and swore eternal friendship, while the bartender begged them to go away and let him sleep.



WHILE Harp bathed his soul in tears, Brick and Soapy rode along the Big Elk grades, rattling along at a good pace over the narrow road. They were nearing the spot where the stage had gone over the edge, and Brick was telling

Soapy about how he and Harp had passed the wreck without knowing it.

Suddenly the team swerved widely on a hairpin turn, throwing one rear wheel off the grade. Brick grabbed the side of the seat, as he was thrown violently over the side, and his eyes caught a flash of a masked man just ahead of the horses, his rifle pointing at them.

The next moment he landed in a heap on the steep side-hill and rolled into a clump of brush, so badly jarred that he was unable to move. It was possibly a minute before he could realize what had happened to him.

He sat up and looked around at a landscape that would not hold still. His eyes gradually regained their focus on objects and he got painfully to his feet. He was bruised all over and his face was bleeding from several cuts. He looked back at the grade, but was unable to see anything on account of the extreme angle.

He remembered the flash he had had of the masked man. His holster was empty, but about half-way up to the grade he found his gun, wedged in the rocks. It was a stiff climb back to the grade, where he found Soapy trying to untangle his team.

Soapy gawped at him and swore wonderingly.

"By —, I thought you was killed," he told Brick.

"I was," panted Brick. "What in — was it, Soapy? Was it a hold-up?"

Soapy yanked the team straight on the grade.

"Whoa! You —ed rattle-brains! Was it a hold-up?"

"Well, was it?" queried Brick, hanging to a rear wheel.

"Git in," ordered Soapy. "I can't keep these —ed hummin'-birds on the grade, if we don't git goin'."

Brick climbed into the seat and Soapy got in beside him. The team started with a jerk and they rattled away toward the Red Hill mine. Brick noticed that Soapy's jaw was set at a belligerent angle and that his profanity was even more cutting than usual.

"Mind talkin' about it?" queried Brick. "Yuh must remember that I unloaded early in the game, and all I got was a glimpse."

"You was pretty —ed lucky, at that," said Soapy. "Did yuh notice the stuff I had in the back of the rig? That old gunnysack and an old rug?"

Brick glanced back. There was nothing in the rear of the buckboard now.

"Yeah, I remember it, Soapy. Where'd it go?"

"It didn't go—it was taken. I've been held-up, by —!"

"Held-up? Then it was a —"

"Appears that it was," dryly. "Do yuh remember—" Soapy jerked the team to a slow trot—"do yuh remember me tellin' yuh once that I was the biggest —ed fool I had ever met?"

"Yeah, I remember it," grinned Brick, wiping some blood off his face.

"Well, I ain't been improvin'," stated Soapy bitterly. "That old gunnysack and that old rug was concealin' the monthly pay-roll of the Red Hill mine."

"Love of gosh!" exploded Brick. "The pay-roll? Why, Soapy, that must 'a' been—"

"Right dog-gone close to twenty-seven thousand dollars."

Brick caressed his bruised face and tried to collect his thoughts.

"I'm smart," said Soapy bitterly. "I was afraid to take a chance on the stage. Just one man, Brick; one man with a Winchester. He didn't say much. By —, I don't think he said anythin', come to think of it."

"The team swerved into the bank, after you fell out, and I stopped 'em. He motioned for me to get out—and I got. He made me unbuckle my belt and drop it. Then he walked past me, kicked the belt and gun along with him and lifted the sack out of the buckboard."

"It was a mighty heavy sack, Brick. The team got to fussin' and I had my hands full with them. When I looked back, he was gone around the turn—and that's all."

"What did he look like?" asked Brick eagerly.

"I dunno. The hole in the muzzle of that rifle was perfectly round—if that's any description. He knowed how to do it."

"Didn' yuh get any idea of what he looked like, Soapy? Was he a big man, small man, thin man, or what did he look like?"

"He sure was," nodded Soapy seriously. "I'll betcha that'll cover him to a T. He was wearin' clothes, too."

"And he didn't talk, eh?"

"—, he didn't need to, Brick. A man with a gun don't have to tell me what to do. Now, I've got to go to the Red Hill and tell

Barney to wait another day. Tomorrow is pay-day, too."

"Twenty-seven thousand dollars," muttered Brick. "That's a lot of money, Soapy."

"Uh-huh. There's over two hundred men at that mine, and their wages runs about five dollars a day apiece. Figure it out for yourself. I'm the loser, Brick."

"Soapy, you're the best loser I ever seen," complimented Brick seriously.

"No, I ain't. If I had any sense, I'd get so mad that I'd bite myself. Yessir, I'd just faunch around until I got me a tempera- ture, bust a blood-vessel or a ham-string. But I'm just — fool enough to set down and make fun of myself."

"Well, why didn't yuh tell me what yuh was carryin'?" asked Brick. "I'd 'a' brought the sawed-off shotgun and we'd 'a' stopped his play."

"Yeah, you'd sure looked fine doin' a high-dive with a short shotgun in your hands, wouldn't yuh? Prob'ly shot your- self and me, too."

"Who knew you was goin' to carry the payroll?"

"Not a danged soul. I hope Barney won't be put out about it."

"I suppose I should 'a' sent it by stage, with half a dozen guards—but I didn't. No-o-o, I got real smart and tried to take it in for myself, thinkin' that nobody would think that I had the danged stuff. Too —ed much thinkin', tha'sall."



IT WAS almost four o'clock when Harp began to get back to normal. Whisky had only made him feel his troubles more keenly. He left Slim arguing with the bartender and started back toward the office. He was not on exactly an even keel and his vision was slightly impaired.

As a result he almost ran into Mrs. Wesson, who was coming out of the store, carrying some groceries.

"How doo-o-o," he said thickly.

"Hello, Harp," she smiled. "Did you see Miss Miller?"

Harp scratched his head and gawped at her.

"Shee Miss Miller? Whaffor?"

"Wasn't you goin' to ask her to the dance at Silverton?"

"Oh!"

Harp rubbed his long nose and reflected deeply, with both eyes closed. Then—

"But you said she was goin' with Sam Leach."

"I didn't say she was goin' with him, Harp. I said that he asked her to go with him. She told him that she had already been invited."

"By whom had she been invited—by whom?" asked Harp.

"I don't think she has been invited by any one, Harp. I know she didn't want to go with Leach; so that was her excuse."

Mrs. Wesson bustled on down the side- walk, leaving Harp looking after her. He cuffed his hat over one ear and hitched up his belt, as he headed for the office. He wanted to find a place where he could sit down alone, because his soul was filled with joy and he wanted to express his feelings with music.

It was nearly supper-time when Brick and Soapy drove into Marlin City. Soapy had promised Barney Devine to have the money for the pay-roll out to the mine by noon the next day, and now he hungered for a session of poker. Brick was stiff and sore from his fall off the grade, but he got a bite to eat at the restaurant, saddled his horse and headed for Silverton.

Brick was certain that some one knew about Soapy going to take the pay-roll money to the Red Hill mine. Soapy had sworn that no one knew about it, but Brick knew that Soapy was just a trifle absent- minded.

Brick tied his horse to the Short Horn hitch-rack and went into the saloon. The games were in progress, but there were few players. Several men nodded to Brick as he came in and went to the bar. Brick knew Charley Meecham, the cashier of the bank, but did not know where Meecham lived; so he inquired of the bartender.

"Charley Meecham? Yeah, I know where he lives." The bartender leaned on the bar and drew an imaginary map on the top of the bar with a stubby finger.

"That's the old Wheaton house, ain't it?" queried Brick.

"Yeah, sure. Meecham has been livin' there nearly a year now. Nice feller, Char- ley is."

Brick nodded and went down the street, past McGill's saloon, turning to the left and going to an old two-story dwelling-house, which was set back considerable distance from the street.

Mrs. Meecham answered his knock. Brick had never met her, but knew her by

sight. Mrs. Meecham was a thin, angular, rather young woman, with a mop of blond hair and a knack of talking about everything that was none of her business.

"Charley's up at the bank," she told Brick. "He went up to do a little work. Won't you come in? You're Mr. Davidson, the sheriff, ain'tcha? Uh-huh, I'm Mrs. Meecham. Come on in and set down in the parlor.

"Nice weather, ain't it? Charley will be back pretty soon, I think. How is everythin' in Marlin City? I met your new school-teacher at the last dance. Nice girl. Take that chair over there. This one looks solid, but it ain't. Sam set down on it the other night and it spread out on him."

Brick sat down and balanced his sombrero on his knees. Mrs. Meecham made him feel nervous. The parlor was a stuffy little room, high-ceiled, with the walls plentifully hung with crayon portraits. An upright organ occupied one corner, and Brick prayed internally that Mrs. Meecham wouldn't attempt to entertain him with music.

"We're going to have another dance Friday night," continued Mrs. Meecham. "You ought to come, Mr. Davidson. I hear that you are quite a dancer. I sure do love a good dance. Sam is a good dancer. He had the Marlin school-teacher down here to the last dance. He's kinda crazy about her."

"Sam Leach?" asked Brick.

"Yes. Sam's my brother. He's over here quite a lot."

"Oh, yeah." Brick crossed his knees and leaned back in his chair. "Your brother, eh? I didn't know that."

"Say, you go ahead and smoke, if you want to. Charley and Sam smoke all the time, and I don't mind it. Keeps out moths."

Brick nodded and began rolling a cigaret.

"You been livin' here long?" he asked.

"About a year—in this house. We've been in Silverton for about two years."

"Like it here?"

"Not so very. Still, it's all right. Silverton folks are real sociable, what there is of them. Charley's got a good job and I ain't got no kick comin'."

"You came here from the East, didn't yuh, Mrs. Meecham?"

"I should say not! My folks came from Ohio, but I was born up in the Okanagan country. I never been East. In fact, I

ain't never had no hankerin' for the East. We came here from Idaho. That's where me and Charley were married. I liked it up there. It was more like home. Of course we knew everybody, and that helps a lot."

"Yeah, it sure helps," agreed Brick, inhaling deeply. "Is Sam from up in that country?"

"Oh, sure. He came down here a couple of years before we did. You know Hank Stagg, don'tcha? Sure, you do. Hank used to be up there. I never knew him, but Sam did. Hank used to drive a stage up there. Him and Baldy Malloy worked for the same outfit. Wasn't it too bad about Baldy's little kid. Gee whillikens, that was awful! Just think of that poor little tyke getting lost like that. And Baldy getting killed. I wonder if he went to sleep and ran off the grade."

"I think so," said Brick slowly. "Yeah, I don't think he knew when he went off."

"That must have been it. Baldy was a good driver, too. You and Hank are rivals for the sheriff's office, ain'tcha? Well, that don't have to make enemies out of folks. Hank is a good scout."

"Well," grinned Brick, "I ain't sore at anybody."

"Sure you ain't. I've always heard that you was good-natured."

The front door opened and Mrs. Meecham got to her feet.

"That's Charley. Hoo-hoo, Charley! C'mon in; I've got company."

Meecham came to the doorway and squinted at Brick. He was a fleshy, black-haired man of about thirty-five, quietly dressed. His eyes were deep-set, cheeks florid and his mouth full-lipped. He smiled and came into the room.

"Hello, Davidson," Meecham held out his hand to Brick. "How are you?"

Brick shook hands with him and they both sat down.

"I've been doing a little work," explained Meecham.

Brick smiled and rolled a fresh cigaret.

"I wanted to ask you a few questions," stated Brick slowly. "Did you get a good look at the man who held you up in the bank?"

"Well, there were three of them, sheriff. Anyway, I think there were three. I'm sure that one stayed near the door. The one who did the talking was a thin sort of a fellow."

"Couldn't recognize his voice, if yuh heard it?"

"Hardly. Still, I might."

"Wasn't there a fire broke out about that time?"

"Yes, there was," said Mrs. Meecham quickly. "It was down at Baldy Malloy's shack. His wood-shed burned down."

"Didja ever hear how it got started?"

Meecham pursed his lips and shook his head wisely.

"Mebbe it was set on purpose, eh?" suggested Brick.

"Possibly."

Brick got to his feet and picked up his hat.

"Well, I reckon that's about all. It kinda looks like somebody was gettin' rich off Sun Dog banks. It sure hits Soapy Caswell hard. I reckon I'll have to ride out and see him soon."

"I saw him this morning," volunteered Mrs. Meecham. "He was in front of the bank in a buckboard."

"He uses a buckboard most of the time," said Meecham.

"Gray team?" queried Brick.

"Yes."

"By golly, that must 'a' been him at the Red Hill mine. I was back on the hill and saw the rig drive up to the mine office. I never thought about it bein' Soapy. A little later I was down at the office and talked with Barney Devine, but he never mentioned that Soapy had been there."

As Brick manufactured this out of whole cloth, Meecham stepped over to the organ and arranged the scattered sheets of music. He turned back to Brick, nodding indifferently.

"Possibly he drove out there," he said. "He didn't say where he was going."

"He wasn't there long—if it was Soapy," added Brick. "I seen 'em take something from the buckboard and take it into the office. They were in there just a minute, when one of 'em came out, got into the buckboard and drove back down the road. Well, I reckon I'll be movin', folks."

"You ought to come to that dance Friday night," urged Mrs. Meecham. "We'll sure have a good time."

"I'll betcha yuh will," smiled Brick. "I dunno whether I'll have time or not. I've got a lot of work mapped out ahead of me and I'll prob'ly be too busy."

"Electioneering?" queried Meecham.

Brick thought there was just the hint of a sneer in the question.

"Nope. Just tryin' to make good on what's left of this term of office, Meecham."

"Oh, I see. Well, come and see us again, sheriff."

"Thank yuh," nodded Brick. "Come and see me, too. *Adios*."

Brick walked back to the Short Horn saloon, but did not go inside. Leach was in there, standing at the bar, talking to several other men. Brick went to the rack and got his horse, mounted and headed for Marlin City.

He had found out several worth-while things, which paid him for the ride to Silverton. It was interesting to know that Meecham was Leach's brother-in-law, and that both of them, together with Hank Stagg and Baldy Malloy, were from Idaho. Leach had come first. Brick decided that he would find out from Soapy just how he happened to employ Charley Meecham.

"It's kinda danged funny, anyway," observed Brick, as he rode back through the night. "Leach got established, and then he gets his brother-in-law to come down. Then comes Hank Stagg and Baldy Malloy. They used to work for the same outfit. I'll sure have to talk with Soapy about this. But if Meecham knew anythin' about Soapy takin' that pay-roll to the Red Hill he didn't show it. Mebbe I'm barkin' up the wrong tree, I dunno."



IT WAS after nine o'clock when Brick got back to Marlin City and stabled his horse. Soapy's team was still at the rack; so Brick felt sure that a big poker game was in progress. He was tired and sore, so he rubbed his bruises with liniment and went to bed. There was no sign of Harp, but Brick knew that Harp would never think of going to bed as long as there was anything going on in town.

And Brick was right. Harp sat between Soapy Caswell and Bill Grant at the poker-table, trying to make his meager stack of chips weather the storm. Harp knew that he had no business in a game with these two men. Banty Harrison, owner of the livery-stable, and Lew Slater, a professional gambler, were the other two in the game.

Harp played carefully, hoarding his money, and drinking hard liquor at regular intervals. He had failed to get up nerve

enough to ask Miss Miller to go to the dance with him. Luck and keen judgment kept Harp in the game until three o'clock in the morning, when he grew bold enough to try and make two deuces beat Bill Grant's full house.

"I'm through," announced Harp. "I've done well to last this long."

"I've got a-plenty, too," agreed Soapy.

They shoved back from the table, while Slater counted their chips, and then all went to the bar for a final drink. Harp was the first one to leave the place. He stopped on the porch of the saloon and gulped in deep breaths of the cool air.

He turned his head quickly and glanced toward the corner of the building. It seemed to him as though some one or something had moved there. But he was unable to see anything. Anyway, it was probably a dog or a cat.

He stepped off the sidewalk and started to cross the street, going diagonally, toward the office. He heard some one step out onto the sidewalk, and a moment later came the roar of a heavy gun-shot.

Harp almost fell down, as he whirled quickly, jerking out his gun. But there was nobody in sight. A gust of smoke drifted past the open doorway, showing that the shot had been fired from near where he had heard the noise.

Men were crowding out of the doorway now; so he trotted back to the edge of the sidewalk. Some one was stretched out on the boards, and now Bill Grant scratched a match, looking down at the man on the sidewalk.

"What in —— happened?" queried Harp.

"It's Soapy!" grunted Grant. "Somebody help me take him inside."

They carried him into the saloon and laid him out on the floor. He was unconscious and bleeding badly.

"I'll get the doctor," offered Slater, and went out of the door on the run.

"Now, who in —— shot him?" demanded Grant. "By ——, they must have waited for him to step out."

"I heard somebody there," offered Harp. "When I went out I heard a noise over by the corner, but I thought it was a dog."

"Well, he's still alive," said Banty Harrison. "While there's life there's hope. By ——, I'd like to get my hands on that dirty murderer. I'd sure——"

Banty stopped, when Brick Davidson,

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half-dressed, came through the doorway. He squinted around at everyone, stepped in close to Soapy and looked down at him.

"I heard the shot," said Brick. "Tell me about it somebody."

"Not much to tell, Brick," said Grant. "Soapy stepped out on the porch and somebody shot him. They must have been layin' for him. Slater has gone after Doc Meyers."

A few moments later the doctor came, half-asleep, half-dressed. He knelt down beside Soapy, while Brick assisted him with his examination.

"Buck-shot," said Brick angrily. "They wasn't takin' no chances, boys."

The doctor was counting the wounds and estimating just what to do.

"What's his chances, Doc?" queried Brick.

"Odds against him, I'm afraid. Five of them hit him above the waist and he's got a couple in his thigh. Somebody get a blanket for a stretcher and we'll carry him down to my place. None of the lead hit him in a vital spot, but he will have a fight ahead of him. I suppose that some of 'em will be hard to locate, but we'll do our best."

"I'll beat it for Silverton to tell his family," offered Banty.

They carried Soapy to Doctor Meyer's office, where the doctor immediately went to work, trying to locate the buck-shot. Brick and Harp went to the office and sat down. Brick held his head in his hands, thinking of every angle of the affair; trying to find a reason why anyone would murder Soapy Caswell.

"They waited for him," said Harp hoarsely. "—— em, they was there when I came out. But why did they shoot old Soapy? Why, he's a good old jigger, Brick. Soapy barked a lot, but he never bit anybody."

"They robbed him of twenty-seven thousand dollars today," said Brick. "He had it in the back of that buckboard, and we were held up on Big Elk grade, near where Baldy went over the edge."

"You jokin', Brick?" Harp did not believe.

"Look at the skin off my face," suggested Brick. "One wheel went off the edge and I took a header down the hill. One man pulled the trick. He was masked—and he knew Soapy was carryin' that pay-roll money, Harp."

Harp swore softly and looked closely at Brick. He still thought that Brick was joking.

"Twenty-seven thousand dollars, Brick? My ——, how much money is that?"

"Well, it's twenty-six days' wages for over two hundred men. Soapy said that their wages would average about five dollars per day. Figure it out, cowboy."

"Well, I'll be ——ed, if this country ain't gettin' awful salty, Brick. But what can we do? When they start shootin' buckshot from ambush in the dark, what's the use of us, I'd like to know? By cripes, I'd sure like to swap lead with the jigger that shot Soapy."

"I hope we will, Harp. In fact, I'm kinda sure we will."

"When?" Harp jumped out of his chair and grabbed Brick by the shoulders. "When do we start, Brick?"

"As soon as we find out who shot him."

"Aw-w-w, ——!" Harp exploded his disgust and walked to the doorway. "I thought you had some idea who done it."

"It was somebody who wanted to kill Soapy Caswell—and they wanted it bad enough to bushwhack him with a shotgun. Now, if we can find out who wanted him dead——"

"That ought to be easy, Brick. We'll start askin' questions as soon as it gets daylight, eh?"

But the sarcasm of Harp's question was lost upon Brick, who sat staring intently at the floor, trying to convince himself that certain things might be true. Bill Grant came to the office and sat down with them.

"Doc's pickin' out shot," he told them hopefully. "Soapy don't know what it's all about, but he's doin' a lot of cussin' over it. Soapy's a tough old customer and he's got a fightin' chance, boys."

"We're pullin' for him, Bill," said Harp. "Brick is pullin' for him—or for somethin'. When Brick gets to thinkin' that-a-way, somethin' is due to rattle real hard."

Brick looked up, his brow furrowed deeply.

"Got an idea, Brick?" queried Grant.

Brick sighed and reached for his cigaret makings.

"It's far-fetched, Bill. Mebbe it's too ——ed far-fetched, but I'm goin' to work on it."

They sat and talked until daylight, when they went over to the Dollar Down and searched for evidence. Some distance away from the saloon they found the empty shotgun cartridge. It was a 12 gage, brass shell.

Brick examined it closely and dropped it into his pocket.

"No clue in that," he told them. "Every shotgun in the country is 12 gage, and mostly every one reloads their own shells."

They went down to the doctor's office and found that Soapy was doing as well as possible. Grant got his horse and rode back to his ranch, while Harp and Brick went back to the office to get some sleep.

"You goin' to that Silverton dance Friday night?" asked Brick, as they pulled off their boots.

"I dunno," Harp shook his head sadly. "I was goin' to ask Miss Miller, but I kinda lost my nerve. I found out about that dance after you went away yesterday; so I went right down to Wesson's. Mrs. Wesson told me that Leach had been there early that mornin' to ask Miss Miller to go with him."

"I thought that ended it. Later on I met Mrs. Wesson and she said——" Harp snapped off a boot and flung it across the floor—"Mrs. Wesson's the dangdest joshier I ever seen, Brick. She said that she only told me that Leach had asked Miss Miller; but she didn't say that Miss Miller refused him."

But the point of the joke was lost on Brick, who was looking straight at Harp, a queer expression in his blue eyes.

"Leach asked her, eh?"

"Yeah."

"Before you knew about the dance. Harp?"

"Yeah. It must 'a' been before Miss Miller went to school."

"Uh-huh."


Brick rolled a cigaret thoughtfully, but did not light it. Then he removed his clothes, placed the cigaret on a chair beside the cot and got into bed.

"Well," Harp yawned and rolled into his blankets, "you've lost yore sense of humor, Brick—or didn't yuh hear what I told yuh?"

"I heard it all right, Harp, and I thank yuh."

"Yuh thank——"

Harp raised up and squinted at Brick, but there was nothing to see, except the mop of tousled red hair against the pillow. Harp snuggled back down into his blankets and grinned to himself. He knew that Brick's mind was pretty busy, when he failed to see a joke.

 IT WAS nearly noon when some one hammered on the office door and awoke Brick, who wrapped a blanket around himself and went to the door. It was Barney Devine. He stepped inside and Brick closed the door behind him.

"Kinda forgot to wake up," smiled Brick, shoving out a chair for Barney. "Set down while I put on some clothes."

Harp awoke and sat up, rubbing his eyes.

"Hello, Barney," he said hoarsely. "How yuh comin'?"

"With a little news," said Barney seriously. "I heard about Soapy Caswell a few minutes ago, and I'm bringing more grief. Last night, or rather about two o'clock this morning, somebody dynamited my safe."

"Dynamited your safe?" Brick had his shirt half-way on, and his head popped out the collar like a jack-in-the-box.

"Completely," nodded Barney. "In fact they ruined it."

"I'll be —ed!" exploded Harp.

"What did they get?" asked Brick.

Barney spread his hands and shrugged his shoulders.

"About ten dollars. They ruined some books and a quart of good whisky—and a good safe. They also ruined one of the walls of the office."

"They must 'a' thought there was money in that safe, didn't they?" queried Harp.

Barney looked questioningly at Brick, who grinned.

"I told Harp about the hold-up, Barney."

"Well, what's the answer?" asked Barney. "It looks to me like two gangs working, Brick. One of them evidently thought that the pay-roll got there O. K. Don't it look like it to you?"

Brick picked up the cigaret he had rolled before going to bed, moistened it with his tongue and scratched a match on the floor.

"Yeah, it looks somethin' like that, Barney."

"What about your pay-roll?" asked Harp.

"I'll have to take it from here, I suppose. Soapy told them that the pay-roll money would go from here today. It's a lucky thing he spoke to them about it, because I've got to have that money at the mine before quitting-time today."

"We'll go with yuh, Barney," stated Brick softly, and added, "And I hope somebody tries to hold yuh up. Get yore clothes

on, Harp. We'll devour some ham and eggs right away, Barney; and then we'll see that yuh get safely to the mine, if we have to shoot every crook in Sun Dog County."

"They won't try any monkey business with us," declared Harp.

"Tha'sso?" Brick grinned and buckled on his belt. "Yuh must remember that my presence didn't help much yesterday."

As a measure of precaution and convenience they split the money into three parts, and rode away. Harp and Brick carried Winchesters handy, and after they reached the Big Elk grades they rode in single file, about fifty feet apart.

And there was no wild riding this time. They took plenty of time, and if there were any hold-up men on the Big Elk grades they changed their mind about trying to hold up the second pay-roll of the Red Hill mine.

Barney was profuse in his thanks and asked them to stay a while, but Brick shook his head. Barney had enough trusted men to look after the money until pay-time, and Brick was anxious for action. They rode back along the grades to where Soapy and Brick had been held up.

Beyond the curve, where Brick had been thrown off the grade, they dismounted and led their horses along the upper side of the grade, trying to find where the robber had left the road. About a hundred yards beyond the curve, where the road curved sharply around the head of a ravine, they discovered an old trail, which angled up through the brush. They mounted and followed the old trail to the top of the divide, where it disappeared. There was nothing to show that the bandit had taken that trail, except that it was the nearest available place where he could have left the grade and traveled under cover.

It was not far from where Santel's horse had been killed; so they rode down there and found that Santel had taken his saddle away. Brick had told Harp about his suspicions of Mostano, and they decided to ride over and take a look at Mostano's place.

But instead of approaching it from the bluff, Brick led the way around to the east, where they came out on the side of a hill about half a mile from the ranch-house. From their elevation they were able to command a good view of the place. There were two horses in the corral, and the half-breed woman was out in the yard.

"Too danged bad we haven't a pair of

glasses," mused Brick. "I'd like to get a good look at that place."

"Let's go down there," suggested Harp.

They had dismounted, and as they climbed into their saddles and started angling down the hill, they heard the report of a rifle. The shot had been fired from considerable distance away. They drew up and studied the house. The woman was hurrying into the house, as though the rifle shot had been a signal for her to get under cover.

Brick laughed and began rolling a cigaret.

"No use goin' down there now, Harp," he said. "We've been spotted. Mostano is no fool. My visit to his place warned him that we might be dangerous; so he's watchin' for us. I'm bettin' that he sees everybody that comes over Big Elk grade. Next time we won't play the game to suit him, and he's goin' to be a sorry half-breed. Let's go home."

"Do you think he had anythin' to do with the shootin' of Soapy?" asked Harp.

"Prob'ly not. Mostano is a meat thief, Harp."

"Well, what has meat thieves got to do with all this dirty work?" demanded Harp.

"Oh, I don't know," Brick yawned and swung his horse around. "I've just got a fool idea, tha'sall. C'mon."



"AND I'm here to state that Brick Davidson is jist about all through bein' sheriff of this county."

Ike Welden, driver of the Redrock stage, hooked his prominent shoulder-blades over the top of the Dollar Down bar and spat viciously. Ike was a sallow-complexioned young man, with wry-neck, tobacco-stained chin and very bony wrists.

Ike had little imagination, which made him dangerous. Danger had little terrors for him, because his mind was of the single-track variety, and his future did not extend beyond the next meal time. Just now he was rather drunk and inclined to be quarrelsome. His thin waist-line sagged sideways under the drag of the heavy, holstered gun on his thigh, as though weakening under the strain.

There was a motley crew in the Dollar Down, but only one of them, Silent Slade, paid any attention to Ike's remark. Silent was standing beside a poker table, watching the play, but now he considered Ike Welden closely.

Several of the men were from Silverton,

who had come to Marlin City upon receipt of news regarding Soapy Caswell. Leach was in the poker game, as was Al Hendricks. Santel was tilted back in a bar-room chair, seemingly paying little attention to anyone. Banty Harrison and Slim Hunter were engrossed in a game of pool, while several others stood around the table and offered advice.

"And I know —ed well what I'm talkin' about," declared Welden loudly.

Hank Stagg came into the room, nodded to everyone who paid him any heed, and went to the bar.

"Ain't I right, Hank?" queried Ike.

"I dunno what yo're talkin' about, but I'll bet yuh are," laughed Hank. "Have a drink?"

"I can't refuse," grinned Ike widely. "I'm a he buzzard and I'm soarin' strong. I jist said that Brick Davidson is all through in this county, Hank. Nobody had guts enough to say that I was wrong. No, I don't want no water with mine. I'm a he buzzard. Here's how."

A moment later Ike squealed like a rabbit. As he lifted his glass of liquor, a strong hand grasped his collar, while another gathered up the slack of his pants. He twisted his head enough to see that Silent Slade was behind him, and then he was lifted bodily, carried to the door and cast out into the street.

Ike landed on his hands and knees on the hard ground, busting the knees out of his overalls and bruising his hands on the gravelly earth. His gun went spinning out of its holster and skidded into the dust.

It was an ignominious thing to happen to a man such as Ike thought he was. He got slowly to his feet, cursing wickedly, and looked at Silent, who stood in the doorway. He turned from Silent, dusted off his sore knees with his sore hands and went to his gun. As he stooped over to pick it up, the dust fairly exploded under his hand, while from behind him came the crashing report of Silent's six-shooter. Ike yanked away and almost fell down.

"Yo're kinda ignorant, ain't yuh?" queried Silent coldly. "Better leave that gun alone until yuh sober up."

Ike squinted at Silent for a moment, straightened up and went across the street. He stopped in front of Wesson's store and looked back, before he headed down the street. Silent went back into the saloon,

where the poker game was resuming play. Banty Harrison and Slim Hunter had crowded in behind Silent, carrying their billiard cues, and now they whooped loudly and dragged Silent to the bar.

"That's bouncin' 'em!" applauded Banty. "I'll betcha he won't do much crawlin' for a while. I just knowed that Ike was goin' to talk himself out of here."

Banty lowered his voice and glanced at Hank Stagg, who had moved over by the poker table.

"Look out for Ike, Silent. He's a dirty little pup, and he's a streak with his gun."

"Kill him first, that's my motto," grinned Slim.

"That's right," nodded Banty. "Every man that Slim has killed has been killed in just that way."

They finished their drinks and went back to their game. Silent remained at the bar, where he could watch both front and rear. He noticed that Santel had paid no attention to the trouble, not even getting out of the chair to see what was going on outside.

"A salty gent," decided Silent, "and worth watchin'."

Silent had hoped to find Brick and Harp in town, but had been informed that they had ridden away with Barney Devine. Soapy Caswell was still unconscious, but the doctor was optimistic.

Slim and Banty finished their game and Silent joined them.

"Yore fussy friend decided to sleep off his jag, I reckon," opined Slim.

"Mebbe." Silent wasn't so sure. "How does it come that Ike ain't drivin' stage today?"

"He quit the job," laughed Slim. "It was prob'bly too much for his brain. The strain must 'a' been awful."

They walked outside and stood on the porch. Ike's gun was not in the street and they all noticed this.

"Sneaked back and got it," said Silent seriously. "It'll take him quite a while to clean the dust out of it, I'll bet."

Brick and Harp were riding into town and the three men crossed to the office to meet them.

"Hyah, pleecemen," greeted Silent. "What do yuh know that's worth the wear and tear on our ear-drums?"

"Not much," grinned Brick, turning his horse over to Harp, who took them away

to the little stable at the rear of the office.

"Silent just throwed Ike Welden out of the saloon," laughed Slim. "Took him by the collar and the seat of his pants and throwed him plumb into the middle of the street."

"What for?" queried Brick.

"Too much talk about you."

"Yeah," Brick grinned affectionately at Silent. "What's the latest from Soapy?"

"Last report said he was still alive," rumbled Silent.

Bill Grant and Al Hendricks came out of the Dollar Down and went toward the doctor's office. In a few moments Santel came out and went to the hitch-rack, where he mounted a gray horse and rode toward the Star Dot. Banty and Slim started arguing over their respective pool abilities, and adjourned to the Dollar Down to settle the championship of the world, as far as they were concerned.

Silent, Brick and Harp went into the office and sat down.

"I ain't gettin' a square deal," declared Silent seriously. "There's a lot of dirt blowin' around and I ain't in on it, Brick. Somehow, I've kinda got a feelin' that somebody is goin' to burn powder, and that I ain't goin' to smell none of it."

"Just be danged thankful yuh ain't, Silent."

"How in —— do yuh figger it? I'm a strong, good-lookin' young feller, and it ain't no ways fair. I just had a taste of action a while ago, and I kinda hankers for somebody to shoot at me."

"Yo're crazy all right," declared Harp. "Any old time that I wish somebody to shoot at me, I don't. I ain't been shot at for quite a while, but with all these things happenin' around here, I'm gettin' so's I duck every time anybody sneezes."

"Sun Dog is gettin' so she ain't no place for to live into. Every day there's a hold-up or a murder. When I think of these ——ed fools fightin' for the sheriff's office, I have to laugh. They sure must seek suicide, by golly."

"All right," grinned Silent. "You resign, Harp. I'm willin' to take yore job, if yo're gettin' scared. No use frazzlin' out all yore nerves, cowboy."

"Yeah?" Harp stretched out on a cot and crossed his knees. "Any old time, Silent. It ain't because I hanker for the job, but I'd hate to leave Brick in the lurch. Right

now he needs a man with brains—so I stay with him; *sabe?*”



AT SUPPER-TIME there was no change in Soapy Caswell's condition. His wife and daughter had come from Silverton and were with him at the doctor's home. Ike Welden had come back to the Dollar Down, but now he minded his own business and drank alone.

It was nearly dark when Brick called Harp aside.

“Sneak the horses out, Harp,” he said, “and tie ‘em back of the stable. Don’t let anybody see yuh, if yuh can help it. Mebbe yuh better wait ‘till it’s a little darker.”

“Y’betcha,” grinned Harp.

He had visions of a ride and of possible trouble. Silent had taken a seat at the poker-table and would stay there as long as the game, or his money, lasted.

A little later Harp joined Brick at the saloon, where they stayed until about nine o’clock.

“Want to set in on the game, Brick?” asked Grant.

Brick yawned and shook his head.

“No-o-o, not tonight, Bill. I’m goin’ to fold up a little of the sleep stuff.”

“Same here,” grinned Grant. “I’m gettin’ old, I guess. Just a few more hands and I’ll be ridin’ toward the blanket.”

Brick got up and started for the door, with Harp behind him. They went to the office, drew the curtains, lighted the lamp and sat down.

“What’s the idea?” queried Harp.

Brick did not reply, so Harp did not repeat the question. For probably fifteen minutes they sat there before Brick blew out the light. Then they went to the rear of the place, crawled out through a window, closing it carefully behind them, and went out to their horses.

They led the horses quite a distance from the stable before mounting, and then Brick led the way straight back toward the Big Elk grades. There was no moon to light their journey, but Brick set the pace at a steady gallop until they reached the up-grade of Big Elk cañon. Harp asked no questions. He knew that Brick would explain things to him when he got good and ready, and not before.

They turned off the grade at the little trail and wormed their way up through the brush to the top of the divide. There the

rising moon silvered the timbered hills and lighted their path, making it much easier for Brick to lead the way to where he and Harp had been when the warning shot had been fired.

Here they stopped and rested the horses. There was a dull glow, as from a fire, at Mostano’s place, but it was impossible for them to tell whether it was within the house or outside. Then they saw some one go from the house to the fire, carrying a lighted lantern.

“We’ll take a li’l trip over and look at ‘em,” decided Brick. “But we’ve got to be danged careful, Harp.”

They rode down the hill, circled the ranch and came in on the opposite side from the fire. At a tumble-down corral they left their horses and went on afoot. There was no light in the house; so they sneaked up to the side and circled toward the rear.

At the corner they were able to get a look at the fire, which seemed to be burning inside the corral. There was an odor of burning hair, mixed with wood-smoke, and Brick chuckled to himself, as he instructed Harp:

“They’re butcherin’ inside the corral and burnin’ the hides. We’ve got ‘em dead, Harp; but look out. Keep down low.”

Brick led the way toward the corral, both of them almost crawling the last fifty feet. They gained the side of the corral unseen, and it was then that Brick realized that he had miscalculated on the gate. It would be suicide to try to climb the fence, and possibly disastrous to try to arrest them from that distance. And it would be almost impossible to go as far as the gate without being detected.

The fire was burning briskly, but the green hides were cutting off the blaze to such an extent that it was impossible for them to see how many men were there and just what they were doing. The lighted lantern was sitting on the ground, but it did little to light up the scene.

“Got to take a chance on ‘em, Harp,” breathed Brick. “If they look this way they’ll see us. C’mon.”

Slowly, cautiously, they raised up, gun in hand, and started to climb the fence. Some one picked up the lantern swung it around and the yellow light picked them up instantly.

Came a quick word of warning, a guttural grunt, and the lantern was dashed out. Then a tongue of yellow light flashed at

them, and Brick felt the bullet brush his cheek. He and Harp were only half-way up the side of the fence, and in a bad position to shoot.

Brick climbed swiftly to the top, while Harp dropped to the ground and raced for the gate. Two more shots licked out into the night toward Brick, who was shooting at the flashes, while Harp was pounding along, trying to block the one exit.

He gained the gate, shooting swiftly at a shadowy figure, when he felt a thudding blow against his shoulder and the gun fell from his fingers. Some one darted past him and faded into the night. Brick came running across the corral, calling to Harp, who was leaning against the fence, searching dizzily for the thing that was searing his shoulder.

Brick almost ran into him.

"Where'd they go, Harp?" he panted.

"I dunno," muttered Harp. "Come and help me, will yuh, Brick? I've got hit with somethin'."

"You got hit, Harp? For — sake! Wait a minute."

Brick lighted a match and held it between them. Then he whistled softly.

"Hang onto yourself, Harp," he cautioned. "They knifed yuh. Grit yore teeth, cowboy."

They both grunted softly and Brick laughed shortly.

"There she is, Harp. I don't think it was deep enough to be dangerous. Does it hurt much?"

"Not so much now." Harp's voice sounded weary. "The —ed thing kinda paralyzed my whole arm. It feels a lot better, but it's soakin' me a-plenty. Didja get any of 'em, Brick?"

"No, I don't think so. How many did you see, Harp?"

"Just one—the one that threw the knife at me. I think it was the squaw. Now what do we do?"

"Go back and have your arm fixed up. Aw, —, this was a fizzle. We don't know any more than we did before, except that we're dead sure that Mostano's outfit are the meat-thieves."

Brick went over to the smoldering fire and kicked the green hides aside. The flames flared up, and as Brick leaned over to search for brands on the hides, a bullet splatted into the fire and threw sparks up into the air.

Brick swore at himself for being such a fool, and ran back to Harp, dragging the hides with him.

"We better be high-tailin' it out of here," panted Brick. "Can yuh run all right, cowboy?"

"I never got hit in the leg," retorted Harp. "— this moonlight! C'mon."

They ducked low and started back toward the house, running as fast as possible. A rifle bullet screamed past them and hit the old ranch-house a resounding *thwack*. Brick had glimpsed the flash of the rifle and knew that the shooter was off to their right; so he ducked to the left and led the way around the other side of the ranch-house, where he halted their headlong flight.

They were in the heavy shadow now. Brick stepped back to the corner and peered in the direction where he had seen the flash, but the light was not good enough to distinguish objects clearly. The fire in the corral was blazing merrily, painting the old pole corral with red high-lights.

"We've got to bust out across that open space to the horses," declared Brick. "Mebbe we better separate quite a ways apart, 'cause one man is a hard target in this light."

They went to the other corner of the house and looked in the direction of the horse. Brick grasped Harp by the arm and pointed toward the bluff trail, where two shadowy objects were plainly visible in the moonlight, going away.

"Our broncs!" snorted Harp. "By —, they've set us on foot, Brick!"

"It sure has all the earmarks of such a deed," agreed Brick sadly. "Our rifles are on them saddles, too; and we'll have one sweet waltz home, cowboy. How's the arm?"

"Feels kinda numb, but I think it has quit bleedin'. I don't care a dang how sore it gets, but I can't afford to lose a lot of blood. What's the next thing to do, I wonder?"

"Walk home, I reckon."

"Yeah—and get plugged when we start."

"Looks that-a-way," reflected Brick, squinting out into the hazy distance. "We bit off more than we could chew, cowboy. If we'd had any sense we'd 'a' cached them broncs."

"Hind-sight ain't noways valuable," sighed Harp, and a moment later a bullet showered splinters off the side of the house.

They dropped flat on the ground and swore foolishly.

"Somebody is prospectin'," opined Harp. "A foot lower and they'd 'a' made a strike. Mebbe yuh like this, Brick, but old man Harris' offspring desires a change of climate. Right above me is a window-sill, Brick; and from my point of view, I'd rather be inside that house."

"Might be a happy idea," admitted Brick. "Get up and see if the window is locked."

"Thank yuh very kindly—but that ain't my suggestion, Brick."

Brick slid to a crouching position, straightened up close to the wall and examined the window. It slid up silently.

"C'mon," whispered Brick.

Swiftly they slid in through the window and the cheap calico curtain dropped behind them, leaving them in total darkness.



SILENT SLADE lowered his head and looked at himself in the back-bar mirror. He tilted his hat down over his eyes, lifted his head as he sang—

"When I'm dead don't bury me a-ta-a-a-af,
Pickle m' bones in alcoho-o-o-ol.
Put a bottle of boo-o-o-oze at m' head and feet
And then I kno-o-ow I'll surely kee-e-ep."

He turned and looked at Sam Leach, who was leaning on the bar, looking solemnly at a glass of liquor. The poker-game had just broken up, leaving Silent Slade winner. And Silent was just intoxicated enough to crow over his poker-playing ability.

"Aw, you were just kinda lucky," observed Leach.

"Tha'sso?" Silent laughed. "Lucky, eh? Any time you whippoorwills from Silvertown mingle cards with a Marlinite—look out. They tell me that yo're backin' Hank Stagg for sheriff."

"Well, what if I am?"

"Are yuh tryin' to be funny—or don'tcha know any better?"

"What's the matter with Hank Stagg?"

"What?" Silent stared at Leach in amazement. "My——, yuh don't expect me to stand here and tell yuh everythin' that's the matter with him, do yuh? I'm limited to just so many words, and they ain't enough to tell yuh more than half what's wrong with Hank Stagg."

"Let's all be good friends, eh?" suggested the bartender, lifting a bottle to the top of the bar. "Election ain't nothin' between friends."

Silent squinted gravely at the bartender. "Li'l dove of peace, this ain't between friends."

"Well, I'm not goin' to quarrel with you, Slade," said Leach. "Yo've got your own opinions on the matter."

"You ain't goin' to quarrel with me?" Silent seemed sad over the information. "You ain't? Well, I won't quarrel with the bartender; so I guess I'll go home. My——, I'm sorry yuh won't quarrel with me, Leach. I'm feelin' quarrelsome, I am."

Silent adjusted his hat to his satisfaction and walked out of the door, heading straight for the hitch-rack. It was almost midnight, and Marlin City was truly a deserted village. At the hitch-rack Silent stopped and studied the situation. His horse was not there.

Just to be doubly sure he put his hand on the rail of the rack and walked all the way around it.

"If there was a horse there I'd encounter same," he said aloud. "The question is this: Where's my horse?"

As far as he could see there was not a horse at any of the hitch-racks. He deliberated deeply. It might be that some one had put the horse in the livery-stable, he thought. Perhaps Brick and Harp had done this as a joke.

He wended his way to the stable and woke up the stableman, who swore witheringly at Silent for dumping him off his cot.

"You want your horse? ——, you ain't got no horse here!"

"Ain't I?" Silent seemed surprized. "Well, now, that's funny."

The stableman turned up the light of his lantern and spat thoughtfully.

"You never brought your horse here, Silent."

"Nope. But she ought to be here, Jimmy."

"Why?"

"Well," Silent spread his big hands, "she ain't at the rack where I left her, that's why."

"Oh, for gosh sake, can yuh beat that?" Jimmy Meeker's voice was squeaky with disgust. "Go on home, Silent."

"Hu-huh," Silent had a new idea now. "Say, Jimmy, didja see anythin' of Ike Welden this evenin'?"

"He left here about nine o'clock, I think."

"It's a —— good thing he did, too," growled Silent. "I'll betcha he turned my

bronc loose. That ornery little pup! When I catch him he'll wish——"

"Go and catch him," advised Jimmy sleepily. "Either do that or hire a hall. Good-night."

Silent turned on his heel and went outside. He did not want to go to the hotel and he couldn't walk to the Nine-Bar-Nine. There was only one thing for him to do—wake up Brick and occupy one of their cots for the night. A cold wind was blowing and Silent shivered. He knew that Brick and Harp would swear at him for waking them up, but he did not care.

He crossed the street and went up to the door, where he knocked several times. There was no response. Silent deliberated. They were probably sleeping in the rear half of the office, with the door shut in between.

He walked through the narrow alley between the sheriff's office and the old feed-store and went up to the back door. There was some one going away from the rear of the office, going past the little stable, and Silent wondered who this might be.

It looked suspicious to Silent, who started after this mysteriously-acting person, but turned and came back to the door. He felt that there was no use in chasing around in the dark after some one.

"Anyway, I dunno who he is," said Silent to himself. "Mebbe it's all right. Hey, Brick!"

He hammered on the back door until the lock threatened to rattle loose, but no one answered him. He grasped the knob and gave it a twist, finding the door locked.

"That's funny," he mused, and as he started to turn away from the door, the world seemed to come to an abrupt end.

Came a deafening crash, a glaring flash of light. Silent was dimly conscious of these things, and felt that he was being hurled away by a great force. Then he seemed to hear men shouting and the world was lighted with the glow of a fire.

He managed to get to his feet and take stock of himself. His body felt numb, but his mind was clearing swiftly now. Just beyond him the flames were eating swiftly into the flimsy old frame buildings, while men and women darted in and out of the glow, fighting it with buckets of water and axes. There were more people arriving at each moment, until every man, woman and child in Marlin City fought to save the town.

Silent went slowly to them. He was unable to walk fast, but he knew that none of his bones had been broken in the explosion. Swiftly the flames were eating toward Wesson's store, and a gang of men began removing the stock.

"Watch the other side of the street, boys!" yelled Cale Wesson. "The —— himself couldn't stop it from takin' this side."

Silent took hold of Cale Wesson's arm and pointed to the spot where the sheriff's office had been.

"Where's Brick and Harp?" he croaked. "Did they get out?"

Wesson stared at him.

"Were they in the office? My ——, look at your face, Silent! What happened to you?"

"Where are they?" insisted Silent.

"By gosh, I'm 'fraid for scare," said Le Blanc, the blacksmith. "De sheriff h'office she's gone for good. Don' somebody know w'ere Breek and Harp be?"

"They went to bed about nine o'clock," volunteered the bartender. "I know that much. But what in —— happened, Wesson? Was it some dynamite exploded?"

"It hit me," said Silent. "I was tryin' to wake Brick up at the back door."

"If they were in the office, they're done for," declared Cale Wesson. "That was a heap of ruins when I got here, and I was one of the first."

Mrs. Wesson and Miss Miller, their dresses scorched, faces red from the heat, heard Cale Wesson's opinion.

"Do you mean to say that Brick and Harp were in their office?" demanded Mrs. Wesson shakily.

"They went to bed at nine o'clock," declared the bartender.

"My ——!" gasped Mrs. Wesson. "I can't believe it. What was it, Cale? What started it?"

"I dunno." Cale was glumly watching the flames eat through the buildings toward his store. "I've got to save what I can, Ma. You keep out of it, can'tcha?"

Cale hurried away toward the store, while Silent, Mrs. Wesson and Miss Miller went as near as possible to the blazing heap that had been the sheriff's office and stood together, watching it.

The bucket-brigade had shifted their operations to putting out any small blaze that might occur on the opposite side of the street, as they knew that their puny efforts would avail nothing against that blaze,

which sent fire-streamers far up into the sky, showering blazing cinders in the wind.

"Can it be possible that they were in there?" asked Miss Miller wearily, pointing at the flames.

"Somebody dynamited the office," declared Silent.

His mind was functioning perfectly again, and he remembered the man he had seen leaving the rear of the office.

"Do you think it was done on purpose?" queried Mrs. Wesson.

"Yes'm, I sure do. Brick and Harp never kept any dynamite in the office."

"But why would any one do a thing like that?" asked Miss Miller. "Surely no one would do it."

"Wouldn't they?" Silent laughed hoarsely and began feeling of his face. "By grab, I come danged near bein' included."

His face was badly skinned. In fact, one eyebrow was almost obliterated, his nose flattened, lips swollen.

"I reckon the door patted me in the face and I slept fifteen minutes," he said, trying to grin. "I'm full of splinters, that's a cinch."

"Well, who would do it?" demanded Mrs. Wesson hotly.

"If I knowed, I'd sure tan his hide and make me a new *latigo*. Somebody stole my horse, too. I tell yuh this country is gettin' ornery, Mrs. Wesson. What this country needs is a good old wholesale killin'. And—" Silent pointed toward the flames—"if old Brick ain't in there, I've got a danged good hunch that there will be."

"Oh, do you think there is a chance that they were not in that office?" asked Miss Miller anxiously, hopefully.

"I couldn't wake 'em up," explained Silent. "I hammered on the front door and then the back door hammered on me."

"The store is on fire, Ma," said Cale Wesson, joining them. "There goes everythin' we own—almost."

"Well, we ain't in it, Cale. There's always somethin' to be thankful for."

"Yeah, I reckon so, Ma. Don't get too close, folks. There a drum of kerosene in there and a lot of ca'tridges. The kerosene will go straight up, I s'pose; but nobody knows which way all them shells are pointin'."

"I hope they're pointin' toward the jigger that set off that dynamite," said Cale, after a moment's pause.

"I don't," grunted Silent. "I want that pleasure m'self."



FOR several minutes Brick and Harp remained motionless. The house was as silent as the tomb. Then Brick scratched a match, shielding it with his hands, as he reflected the light around.

To the right of them was the rear door, while directly across the room was another window. Brick went to the door and locked it securely, crossed and looked at the window, finding it nailed down.

Another match lighted them into the living-room, where they locked the front door and took stock of their surroundings. There was a candle in the neck of a bottle on the table, which Brick lighted. The front and side windows were nailed down and heavily curtained.

"How's the shoulder?" asked Brick.

Harp flexed his arm carefully and grimaced a little.

"It ain't goin' to stop me," he declared. "But it sure had me guessin'. My shirt's all blood, but the cut is sealed shut."

The Mostaño family kept house in one room only. There was a rusty cook-stove, on which was a greasy looking stew-kettle and a battered frying-pan. A home-made table fitted into one corner, on which was piled the rest of their utensils. In the other corner was a built-in bunk, with a collection of tumbled blankets.

The floor was filthy and the air was filled with odors of long-departed food. Cobwebs hung from the ceiling in profusion.

"Ugh!" grunted Harp disgustedly. "What a place to live."

"Yeah, that's right," grinned Brick. "And what a place to die."

Harp laughed and laid his six-shooter across his knees, as he tried to roll a cigaret.

"Let me do that," said Brick. "Yere hand ain't workin' so good."

He reached for the tobacco and papers and had just started to roll the cigaret, when a peculiar noise sent both of them onto the floor, clutching their guns. Swiftly their eyes searched everywhere and came back to each other's faces.

"What the — was that?" whispered Harp.

Brick shook his head. Then it came again—

"Yea-a-a-a."

Brick squinted at the bunk. There was a

curious expression in his eyes, as he turned and looked at Harp. Then he got to his feet and strode across the room to the bunk.

"C'mere," he whispered to Harp, who went over to him.

Brick threw back the blanket, disclosing a little copper-colored baby about a year old, possibly less. The little one was looking up at them with its round, black eyes. Then it grinned widely and kicked both feet up against the blanket.

The two men looked at each other and laughed foolishly.

"Little son-of-a-gun," whispered Brick. "Ain't he a dinger?"

"Why not 'she'?" grinned Harp.

"Mebbe," Brick grinned down at the baby. "I dunno much about 'em, but I'd say that this one is kinda cute. Look at the son-of-a-gun kick."

Harp looked around quickly and went back to the door, where he listened closely.

"We don't want to forget where we are, Brick. I'm thinkin' that the Mostano family will be kinda curious to know how that kid is gettin' along."

"I know danged well I would if it was mine," grinned Brick. "Anyway, it kinda stops 'em from promiscuous shootin' around here; so we'll set tight and wait for mornin'."

"Tha'sall right," said Harp thoughtfully, "but what are they so anxious to kill us off for? I should think they'd be danged willin' to let us get out of here."

"Does look curious," admitted Brick. "Mebbe they think that they can kill us off and do as they please the rest of their lives. A breed is a queer character, Harp. He prob'ly figures that I'm the law; and when I'm wiped out—blooey goes the law."

They sat down against the wall, where they could watch both doors, and enjoyed a smoke. The baby began to cry fitfully.

"Betcha its hungry," declared Harp. "They allus weep that-a-way when they're needin' food."

"A sweet chance it's got of gettin' a feed tonight."

But the baby did not appreciate that fact, and raised its voice in lamentations. Brick grew nervous over the prolonged wailing.

"How long does it take a kid to starve to death, Harp?"

"I dunno. Prob'ly a couple of hours, at least. That little jigger won't never live to starve to death, Brick."

"Why not?"

"Why, he'll bust his windpipe squallin' that-a-way. Didja ever hear such wheezy yelps? Mebbe it's got the croup."

"It has sure got somethin'," declared Brick. "They ought to call that kid A. S. Mostano."

"Why the A. S., Brick?"

"Almighty Squawk. Whoo-ee, listen to him yowl."

The baby was giving a good imitation of a discordant accordion now; every breath a yelp. Brick got to his feet and started toward the bunk, intending to do everything within his power to soothe the child, but stopped midway of the room.

Someone was knocking gently on the front door. Brick and Harp exchanged glances of wonderment. Brick stepped over beside the door and said—

"Who's there?"

"I mus' have baby, please." It was Mrs. Mostano's voice.

Brick turned his head and grinned at Harp.

"You want the baby, eh?" questioned Brick. "Who's with yuh?"

"Nobody with me. I want baby."

"Uh-huh."

Brick motioned Harp to come over beside him and they backed close to the wall.

"If she ain't alone, smoke — out of 'em, Harp," whispered Brick.

"I wouldn't let her in," declared Harp.

"To — with the whole gang, Brick."

"I'd rather be shot than to listen to that yowlin' all night. Get set, cowboy."

Brick reached over and lifted the bar off the slots, letting the door swing open. For a moment there was silence, then the half-breed woman poked her head inside. Her eyes bored into Brick's face, but his grin reassured her and she stepped inside.

"Put that bar across the door," ordered Brick.

She turned and barred the door. The two men relaxed and watched her hurry across to the bunk, where she picked up the crying baby.

"Goin' to take him with yuh?" queried Brick.

The woman shook her head, as she wrapped the baby in a piece of bright-colored blanket. Brick grinned and stepped back to the connecting door. For some reason he was suspicious of this woman. Still he could not see where she could do them any harm.

She was crooning an Indian song to the youngster, as she bundled him up well and placed him on the bunk. Harp was still standing near the front door, listening intently for any noise outside.

The Indian woman flung another blanket across half of the child. Then she took hold of the bunk with both hands, drew it away from the wall and swung it completely around. Brick squinted at her and wondered why she should change the position of the bunk.

Then he knew. In the half-light from the candle he saw the floor lift up where the bunk had been. In a flash he realized that the bunk had stood over a trap-door and that the woman had used the baby as an excuse to uncover that entrance.

Harp had seen it, too. He darted toward Brick, shouting a warning. But Brick had already swung up his gun and fired one shot at the black mass under the trap-door.

"The back door!" snapped Brick, as Harp darted past him.

Then he swung his gun around and his next shot smashed into the bottle under the guttering candle and the room went dark.

Brick whirled and ran to Harp, who had managed to claw the bar away from the door, and without a thought of what might be waiting outside for them, they darted out into the night.

But no one tried to block them now, as they pounded heavily away from the house, circling toward the bluff trail. After about two hundred yards at top speed, Brick stopped and looked back. Not a light was showing in the old ranch-house. They listened, but there was not a sound.

"By —, that 'breed female came darned near to bein' the death of us," panted Harp. "Didja see anybody, Brick?"

"No. I shot once at the trap-door and once at the candle, but I didn't see nobody. Pretty foxy, eh? Their foolish move was in openin' that trap so soon. If they'd 'a' waited a little while, we'd 'a' been easy pickin', I reckon."

"By golly, there was more than one person in that deal, Brick."

"Oh, yeah. Well—" Brick drew a deep breath and hitched up his belt—"I reckon we've got to walk to Marlin City, cowboy."

It was at least fifteen miles; and fifteen miles is a long ways, walking on high-heeled boots.

"Let's go over to the Red Hill mine and

borrow a couple of broncs from Barney Devine," suggested Harp.

"That's a pious idea," agreed Brick. "And if he ain't got no rollin' stock, we'll stay all night and ride in on the stage tomorrow. It's sure a nice thing for the sheriff to let somebody steal his horses. But," he added optimistically, "I reckon I'm about the only one in Sun Dog that could have his horses stolen without yellin' to high Heaven for a new sheriff."

"I'm kinda in favor of a new one m'self," grunted Harp. "And I hope to gosh he ain't so friendly to me that I can't refuse to be his deputy."



MARLIN CITY was a sorry-looking place in the gray dawn. One whole side of the main street was a smoldering mass of ruins, while the buildings on the opposite side were badly scorched and warped from the extreme heat. The street was like an ash-heap, and strewn with everything that was possible to salvage from the doomed buildings.

Silent Slade, his face covered with strips of plaster, poked moodily among the blackened ruins of the sheriff's office, hoping against hope that he would not find anything resembling a human remain. A number of men wandered about the street, talking about the fire, and Slade noticed that some of them were from Silverton.

Ike Welden sat on the sidewalk in front of the Dollar Down, and Silent scowled at him. He blamed Ike for the loss of his horse and wondered how he could prove it sufficiently to take Ike and tie him into a bow-knot. A rider was coming up the street, and Silent recognized him as Meecham, the cashier of the Silverton bank. He dismounted and looked at the results of the fire.

"Pretty bad blaze," he said to Silent.

"Yeah, pretty bad," admitted Silent.

"How did it start?"

"With a — of a crash."

Meecham looked curiously at him, but Silent did not feel in any mood to talk about it.

"Did you hear how Mr. Caswell is this morning?"

Silent shook his head. He was not interested in Soapy. Meecham glanced up the street, where Leach, Bill Grant and Slim Hunter were coming toward them. There was a bullet-hole in the cantle of Meecham's

saddle which was plainly visible, and Silent wondered how it came there.

The three men spoke to Meecham and from them he gathered the information that Soapy was conscious again and stood a good chance of complete recovery. Then Meecham mounted and rode up the street toward the doctor's home.

"Find anythin', Silent?" queried Grant.

"Not a thing, Bill. They wasn't in that fire, that's a cinch. That fire wasn't hot enough to——"

Silent paused to stare at two saddled horses, which were straggling into view, coming toward the ruins of Brick's old stable.

"By ——, there's their horses!" exploded Silent.

He ran across the smoldering mass and managed to catch Brick's sorrel. The other men joined him, and Slim Hunter captured Harp's roan filly.

Neither horse had been injured in any way, and the reins had been tied to the saddle-horns. From under the right-hand fender of each saddle extended a gun-scabbard, and in each one was a rifle—fully loaded.

Silent scratched his head wonderingly.

"By grab, there's dirty work here!" he declared. "These horses were turned loose. Both of them broncs are rein-broke, and they never wandered away, y'betcha."

Leach laughed scornfully and shook his head.

"Does it sound funny to you?" growled Silent.

"For the sheriff to lose his horse—yes."

"Yeah?"

Silent squared around and studied Leach, who drew slightly away from the menace of the big man's expression.

"Somebody stole my horse last night," said Silent, after a moment. "Now yuh might try laughin' at that information, Leach."

"But you are not the sheriff, Slade."

"No, but I'm jist such a ——ed good friend of his that it's all in the fambly. I hope yuh laugh, you darned pole-cat."

Leach drew back and his face went dark with anger, but Grant stepped between them.

"There's enough trouble around here without you two takin' shots at each other," he said quickly. "Forget it, both of yuh."

"I'm gettin' tired of it," declared Leach. "I can't talk to the sheriff, deputy nor anybody connected with the ——ed office without gettin' insulted."

"Nobody asked yuh to talk to 'em," retorted Silent hotly. "They'll get along without yuh."

"Well, there's one satisfaction," said Leach. "We'll soon be rid of the present incumbents."

"What's incumbents?" queried Silent.

Leach growled something about ignorant people and walked across the street toward the saloon. Silent watched him moodily before turning to Grant and Slim Hunter.

"When did Ike Welden come back to Marlin City?"

"He rode up with me," said Slim. "We just got here a while ago. I found him in the Short Horn saloon, half-drunk, and talkin' about the big fire in Marlin City. They could see it from there. I told him I was comin' up here to see what it was all about; so he came along."

"They could see it from Silverton, couldn't they?" asked Silent.

"Yeah, you bet they could," replied Slim.

"How come yuh didn't get here sooner?"

Slim grinned widely and dug his toe into the ashes.

"I was out settin' up with m' best girl, and I never knowed there was a fire until I came into town."

Bill Grant laughed and looked toward the street. A rider was coming toward them and they all recognized him as Brick Davidson. He was riding a mule bareback. Silent whooped like an Indian and fairly dragged Brick off the long-eared beast, while the others crowded around and shot questions at him so fast that he could answer none of them.

"For gosh sake hold on!" he begged.

"Yeah, Harp's all right. He stopped at the doctor's place to get his arm dressed. He got stuck with a knife. Now, what in —— happened to Marlin City?"

And between the three of them they managed to give Brick a fairly good idea of what had taken place the night before—or rather, that morning. Brick said nothing during the telling.

"And I've been huntin' for yore danged carcasses ever since," declared Silent.

"Uh-huh!" Brick squinted at the ruins and back at their two horses. "When did our broncs show up?"

"Just a few minutes ago," replied Grant.

Brick looked over his sorrel carefully, and then removed his rifle from the scabbard. It was loaded, and with a cartridge

in the chamber. He grinned at the three men, cocked the gun, pointed it at the sky and pulled the trigger.

Only the dull click of the hammer came to their ears. Brick shoved the gun back into the scabbard and went over to the mule.

"I've got to put this animile in the stable," he told them. "He ain't much of a vehicle, but he was all I could get."

He started away with the animal and Silent turned triumphantly to Grant and Hunter.

"Somethin' is due to drop pretty danged hard, gents. He knowed them guns had been monkeyed with, didn't he? Grins all over his face, too. Don't want to talk, does he? That's Brick Davidson. He's got somethin' on his mind, I tell yuh."

"I hope so," sighed Grant.

"I've got to see Harp," declared Silent. "Stuck with a knife, eh? By golly, they sure do use every old kind of a weapon. Next thing we know somebody will get bit."

Silent strode away, shaking his head, while Grant and Hunter crossed the street to the saloon.

"Do yuh think Brick has got any ideas?" queried Slim.

"I'll betcha," nodded Grant. "And what's more, I'm glad that I can stand investigation."

"Holy cats, me, too!" snorted Slim.

Brick turned the mule over to Jimmy Meeker and went back up the street, where he spent a little time looking at what was left of that side of the street. Miss Miller came down the street, but did not see Brick until face to face with him. She was carrying some school-books. He tipped his hat and grinned, and only real quickness on his part saved her books from falling into the ashes.

She was staring at him, as he handed the books to her, and she caught his hand.

"Mr. Davidson," she faltered, "you—you are all right?"

"Uh-huh. Sure I'm all right. What's the matter?"

She had turned and was staring at the tangle of burnt buildings.

"Nun—nothing. I—you see, we thought that you——"

"Yuh mean that folks thought we was in that fire, ma'am?"

"Yes. You see, we thought—somebody said——"

"That we went to bed at nine o'clock?"

"Yes."

Brick grinned widely and shook his head. "Harp's at the doctor's office," he volunteered.

Miss Miller turned and glanced quickly in that direction.

"At the doctor's office? Why—what is the matter?"

"Somebody stuck a knife in his arm last night."

"A knife? Is he——"

She paused anxiously.

"Nope. It wasn't much of a cut, ma'am. He'll be all right. Harp is so darned tough and ornery that cold steel won't never hurt him. I'll betcha they'll have to grind a new point on that knife."

Brick grinned, lifted his hat and walked on, watching her from the corner of his eye. She seemed undecided what to do, but finally went on toward the other end of town where the little schoolhouse was located. Brick laughed to himself and shook his head.

"That's what's the matter, eh?" he chuckled. "School-teacher worryin' about a skinny puncher. Huh! I won't dare to tell Harp, that's a cinch. Plumb ruin him for my use. By golly, I never do understand women. Still, she may like jew's-harp music so much that she's willin' to overlook anythin' else."

Bill Grant crossed from the saloon and joined Brick.

"What do yuh make of it?" queried Grant. "Do yuh think that somebody tried to kill you and Harp last night?"

Brick grinned, but without mirth.

"Looks that-a-way, Bill. We were supposed to be in bed, yuh know."

"Sure."

"But we wasn't, Bill. Me and Harp busted into some meat stealin' last night and we danged near got our needin's. They sure did outsmart us in great shape. Even stole our horses and we had to borrow a couple of mules from the Red Hill mine. Harp got a knife in his shoulder—and we don't know a —— of a lot more than we did before."

"Who were the thieves, Brick?"

"I can't swear to anybody. That's the worst of workin' in the dark."



HARP and Silent were coming from the doctor's office, leading the mule that Harp had ridden in from the mine. Aside from being slightly pale Harp showed no ill effects from his knife-wound.

He nodded to Grant and looked over the ruins. Silent had told him all about the explosion and fire; so he had no questions to ask.

"Must 'a' been warm around here," was his only comment.

"It sure was," agreed Bill Grant. "My neck is still hot, and it was mostly all over when I got here. I'll buy a drink."

As they started toward the saloon, Silent stepped in beside Brick and whispered—

"There's a saddle at the hitch-rack with a bullet-hole in the cantle."

"Who owns it?" asked Brick.

"Meecham, the Silverton bank cashier, rode in on it a while ago."

"Sure it's a bullet-hole, Silent?"

"Y'betcha."

Brick squinted thoughtfully, as they lined up at the bar. Meecham was sitting at a card-table, reading a paper, paying no attention to any one. Leach and Cale Wesson were standing near the front of the room, talking about the fire, and near the rear, Ike Welden and Slim Hunter were playing a listless game of pool.

The bartender greeted Brick effusively and insisted that the drinks were "on the house."

"I was afraid yuh died in that fire, Brick. By golly, I'm sure glad to see yuh. And old Harp, too."

Brick grinned and looked over at Meecham.

"Have a little drink, Meecham?" he asked.

Meecham looked up at Brick and shook his head.

"No, thank you."

"Oh, that's all right," said Brick pleasantly. "I just thought yuh might be one of the sufferers."

Meecham stared at him closely.

"What do you mean, Davidson?" he asked.

"Oh, I just didn't know but what somebody had tried to kill you off, too. There's a bullet-hole in the cantle of yore saddle, yuh know."

"A bullet-hole?"

Meecham's tone had been rather loud and attracted the attention of every one. Leach came back toward the bar, and the two cowpunchers stopped their pool playing to listen.

"In yore saddle," nodded Brick. "Of course, it ain't likely that you was in the saddle at the time, Meecham."

"Well, I—you see that horse and saddle belongs to the livery-stable. I merely rented it."

"What about the bullet-hole?" asked Leach.

"I don't know anything about it," declared Meecham. "It must have been there when I got it."

"They'd know at the stable," opined Silent.

"Yeah, that's right," agreed Brick, "McKeever would know."

"Let's take a squint at that saddle," suggested Grant. "It might not be a bullet-hole."

"Well, what if it was!" snorted Ike Welden. "My —, yo're makin' a lot of fuss about a bullet-hole in a saddle. You act like it had hit all of yuh."

Silent turned and looked at Ike.

"Welden, yo're breedin' a lot of misery for yourself," he declared. "I dumped yuh into the street once, yuh remember. Last night somebody swiped my bronc—and I better not find out that it was you."

"You tryin' to make out that I stole yore bronc, Slade?"

"If I thought yuh did I'd fill yuh so —ed full of holes that they'd have to use ce-ment instead of embalmin'-fluid, if they wanted yuh to keep."

"Yeah, I s'pose," Ike sneered openly, but was careful to keep his hands above waist-level. He was the equal of any man on the draw, but he was afraid of this big man—afraid that he might not be able to stop him.

"Don't argue with that worm," said Harp impatiently. "He ain't goin' to take any chances. Now, if it was dark and he had a tree or a rock in front of him—aw, c'mon, Silent."

They went out through the doorway, leaving Ike to swear and buy himself a drink. At the hitch-rack they examined the saddle. There was no doubt of it being a bullet-hole. The saddle was a cheap affair, and the bullet had smashed through the cantle, but was lodged between the wood and the leather covering of the back.

With a slash of his knife Brick cut through the leather and salvaged the bullet, which was so badly battered that it was impossible, except by weight, to tell what caliber it had been.

"Well," said Grant dryly, "there ain't much question about it bein' a bullet-hole."

"Yeah, it is a bullet-hole," admitted

Leach, although he did not seem greatly concerned over it.

"Well, I don't know anything about it." Meecham was inclined to be a trifle peevish over it. "I hired this horse and saddle to ride up here and see how Mr. Caswell was getting along, and if they gave me a saddle with a bullet-hole in it——"

"Well, that's all right," grinned Brick. "Nobody's blamin' you for it, Meecham."

Brick turned and went back toward the saloon, as though dismissing the subject. Meecham talked with Leach and Grant for a few minutes before mounting his horse and going back toward Silverton.

Harp got their two horses and took them to the livery-stable. In a few minutes he came back, carrying the two rifles, and found Brick talking with Cale Wesson.

"You fellers come down to my house," suggested Cale. "We've got plenty of room. You ain't got no office, jail nor stable, Brick; so yuh might as well hive up at my place until yuh get somethin' built."

"By golly, that would be fine," agreed Harp joyfully.

Brick and Cale exchanged amused glances and Cale drawled slowly:

"I'd rather have the music inside my house at a reasonable hour than to have it outside at four o'clock in the mornin'. Ma kinda likes music, too. Of course, Miss Miller won't mind. Anyway, she's too danged much of a lady to say what she thinks."

"All right, Cale," grinned Brick. "It would be mighty nice if yuh could take care of us for a few days."

"Sure would," nodded Harp, and without further argument he headed for the Wesson home, carrying the two useless rifles.

Leach, Slim Hunter and Ike Weldon went to the hitch-rack, mounted their horses, and rode out of town toward Silverton. They nodded to Cale and Brick as they rode past. Santel came in from the other end of town and left his horse at the hitch-rack. He had not been there during the fire, and now he came over and considered the wreckage.

His examination was very brief and he came past Brick and Cale, on his way to the Dollar Down. He nodded curtly, and Brick felt instinctively that Santel had been drinking. His eyes were bloodshot and he walked rather too deliberately, as though trying to show that he was perfectly sober. He met Bill Grant in the

doorway, and after a moment of conversation, they both went into the saloon.

"I couldn't like that Santel," observed Wesson. "I ain't got a darned thing against him, yuh understand, but there's somethin' so dog-goned cold-blooded about him that it kinda gits me."

"He's salty," grinned Brick. "He's also drunk right now, Cale. Let's go down and help Harp arrange them two rifles. That's all we've got left to move."

"Yo're lucky. I lost danged near everythin' I owned. But Ma says we're kinda lucky, and I s'pose that's a good way to look at things. We'll go down and see if she's got anythin' to cook for a meal."

Mrs. Wesson gave Brick and Harp an upstairs room, where they decided to grab a few hours sleep. Both of them were weary, and the peacefulness of the Wesson home sent them quickly into dreamland.

Mrs. Wesson woke them up at supper-time and they came down to the outdoor wash-bench to clean up a little.

"Bill Grant has been over twice to see yuh," stated Mrs. Wesson.

"Tha'sso?" Brick lifted his wet face from the basin and blinked the soap out of his eyes. "What'd Bill want?"

"He didn't say. I asked him if it was important, but he never said whether it was or not. Said he'd come again."

They were just sitting down at the table, when Bill Grant knocked on the door and informed Mrs. Wesson that he wanted to see Brick. He wouldn't come in; so Brick went out to him.

"I don't like to take yuh away from a meal, Brick; but I've got somethin' yuh ought to know. Santel's drunk. He got me in a corner this afternoon and talked for an hour. He's been detectin' to beat ——, so he says. And here's his solution of the thing:

"You and Silent Slade and Harp Harris must be the three men who done the dirty work; *sabe?* Yo're the medium-sized one, Silent is the big one, and Harp is the tall, skinny one. Now, what do yuh think of that, Brick?"

Brick squinted hard over the information and Grant watched him closely. Then Brick's face broke into a grin, as he looked up.

"Well, Bill, I'm s'prized that Santel ever found out that much. It sure does look like us three jiggers have been featherin' our nests, don't it?"

"Aw, —, I didn't believe him, Brick."

"Thank yuh, Bill. Where is Santel now?"

"He's gone to Silverton. I reckon he's through around here. He told me that he was, anyway."

"Yeah, I reckon he is," Brick grew serious.

"He said he was goin' to put his case up to Leach and Hendricks and let them do what they dang pleased about it."

"That's real thoughtful of him, I'm sure. Bill, I'm glad yuh told me this, and I thank yuh kindly."

"Yo're welcome, Brick. But dang it all, I wish you could put the deadwood on the guilty parties. I'm for yuh."

"Well," Brick grinned widely, "mebbe I will, as soon as I get time. I've been so dog-gone busy lately. Say, didja see Silent around the Dollar Down when yuh left?"

"He's playin' single-handed black-jack with Le Blanc."

"Fine. Tell him to come down here right away, will yuh, Bill?"

"Sure."

Grant turned and walked back toward the street, while Brick went back to his supper.

Miss Miller smiled at Brick as he sat down beside Harp.

"I have been trying to get Mr. Harris to tell me how he came to get that wound in his shoulder," said Miss Miller, "but he refuses to tell me."

Harp squinted at Brick, who grinned covertly and shook his head.

"I don't blame him for not talkin' about it," declared Brick. "Mebbe next time he'll look out for knife-throwin' women."

"Knife-throwing women?"

Miss Miller glanced sharply at Harp, whose ears immediately assumed a scarlet tint.

"Half-breed," nodded Brick. "Married woman, too. Her husband was shootin' mad, too."

Harp shoved back his chair and got to his feet.

"That's all a danged lie!" he wailed. "I—I—"

"I can't understand this risin' generation," interrupted Mrs. Wesson seriously. "They do the darndest things. Why, when I was young, if a man monkeyed around a married woman——"

Harp whirled around, picked up his hat and stamped out of the house, while Brick

put his head on his arms and cried tears. Mrs. Wesson hammered Cale on the back until the poor man slid sideways out of his chair; but Miss Miller failed to see the humor of the situation.

"It's a — shame," declared Cale. "Don'tcha believe a danged thing that either of these critters try to make yuh believe, Miss Miller. That's their idea of fun."

"O-o-o-oh, that was good!" wailed Mrs. Wesson. "The look on his face! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Brick, he'll hate us both for life."

"I fail to see anything funny about it," stated Miss Miller. "Why accuse a man of something that isn't true, Mr. Davidson?"

"It was true," choked Brick. "But not the way it sounded. He did get knifed by a woman. Anyway, I think it was a woman. And her husband was shootin' mad, too. Me and Harp caught 'em stealing cattle— butcherin' at night and burnin' the hides."

Brick wiped away his tears and was about to tell them what had happened the night before, when Silent knocked loudly at the front door.

"What happened to little Harp Harris?" he asked. "I met him up the street and asked him what you wanted. He said he didn't care a — what you wanted, but he knew what you was goin' to get."

"He's got indigestion," said Mrs. Wesson. "He told me the other day that he had it real bad. You know that upsets a man somethin' awful. I'd sure hate to marry a man that has indigestion. I sure know what it's like, 'cause Cale has touches of it."

"I never had anythin' like that in my life!" snorted Cale.

"I'll betcha yuh got it right now," grinned Brick. "Anybody that would speak to Ma Wesson that-a-way has got stummick trouble."

Cale picked up his hat and started for the door.

"All right, all right! I s'pose I've got to stand for it. If I'd 'a' had any sense I'd never invited the sheriff's office to settle down in my house. Between Ma and Brick, I'll prob'ly have to pitch a tent, if I want to have any peace."

"Didja want me, Brick?" queried Silent, "or is that part of the joke?"

Brick laughed and shook his head.

"I was just wonderin' if you'd like to ride to Silverton with me this evenin'."

Silent squinted closely at Brick's face. Their eyes met for a moment and a grin

spread Silent's lips. He knew that Brick was not riding to Silverton just for the ride.

"Yeah, I'd like to go along," said Silent indifferently. "I'm ready any time you are. Is Harp goin' along?"

"No, I don't think so. He better take care of that shoulder for a day or two." Brick turned to Miss Miller. "Are you goin' to the dance tomorrow night with Harp, Miss Miller?"

"Not that I know of," she replied.

"I must remind Harp of that," said Brick seriously. "He told me to be sure and remind him to ask yuh—but it slipped my mind completely."

"Oh, is that so?"

Miss Miller's brows lifted slightly and she glanced at Mrs. Wesson, who was still chuckling.

"And if I forget it, Ma will remind him of it when he comes back."

Brick picked up his hat and walked out behind Silent, while Ma Wesson wiped away her tears and patted Miss Miller on the arm.

"Don't mind him, dearie," she choked. "Brick don't lie, but he sure does twist the truth around until it won't neither lay down nor stand up. Harp would do the same to Brick, if he had the chance. They're both salt of the earth."

"And you—" began Miss Miller accusingly.

"Oh, me!" Ma Wesson laughed heartily. "I'll back either of 'em, 'cause I love 'em both. Don't mind me. If Harp don't ask yuh to go with him, I'll have Cale take both of us. By golly, I'd like to tromp around over a dance floor ag'in myself."

"I think that would be fun, Mrs. Wesson."

"Fun, —! It'd be a riot."



IT WAS dark when Santel rode into Silverton. He took his horse to the livery-stable and turned it over to a skinny youngster. Santel had bought a bottle of liquor at Marlin City and had emptied it on the way down. He threw it away, as he came out of the stable and went toward the Short Horn saloon.

He was pretty drunk, but did not stagger, as he went into the saloon and stopped at the bar. Leach was in the rear of the room, talking to Al Hendricks, and Santel went to them. They gave him a chair and he sat down with them at a card-table.

"Well, what's the news?" asked Hendricks guardedly.

"I'm quittin' the job," announced Santel. "I told Grant what I decided upon, and he didn't seem to believe me."

"You mean to say that you couldn't find out anythin'?" asked Hendricks.

Santel laughed angrily. Leach watched him closely. He knew that Santel was drunk.

"I reckon I could find out enough," said Santel hoarsely, "but what the — is the use? We all know that these robberies were done by three men, don't we?"

"Well?"

"Three men," continued Santel. "A big man, a medium-sized man and a tall, thin man. I've been lookin' for three men of that description—three men who are close enough together to do this work. And—" Santel shook his head slowly—"there's just three men in this county that answer that description, and that is the sheriff, his deputy and the big fellow, Slade."

"Aw, —!" snorted Hendricks.

"There yuh are," Santel shrugged his shoulders wearily.

"And why not?" queried Leach. "Are they so —ed pure that they wouldn't do a thing like that, Al?"

Hendricks frowned heavily and looked at Santel.

"Is this the best you could do, Santel?"

"Suits me."

"Where's your proof?"

"Proof? What in — do yuh want—a confession?"

Hendricks shook his head quickly.

"You couldn't convict anybody on that evidence."

"There's a murder or two connected with this," reminded Leach meaningly. "It might not be a jury case, Al."

Hendricks laughed and shook his head.

"Don't be a fool, Leach. Brick Davidson never done these things. Santel may be a good detective, but he sure got off on the wrong foot that time. I'd stake my life on Brick."

"There yuh are," said Santel disgustedly. "It's about time for me to quit."

"It sure is—if Brick finds it out."

"All right," Santel got to his feet. "I've quit. Now, I'm goin' to get drunk and as soon as I get paid for my work, I'm goin' to pull my freight; *sabe?*"

He swaggered back to the bar, leaving Hendricks and Leach at the table.

"You sure picked a good man," observed Hendricks.

"Did I?" Leach smiled crookedly. "I guess that Santel found out what he came here to find. It's no fault of his if we don't agree with him."

"It's a free country, Leach, and—here comes Brick now."

Brick was coming into the place, with Silent behind him. Santel was at the bar, taking a drink, but he turned and looked at Brick, who stopped short and faced Santel.

Hendricks started to get up from the table, but Leach grasped him by the arm, drawing him back. Santel was just drunk enough to forget caution, and his lips drew up in a wolfish grin.

"Well," he said, as his voice carried to all parts of the room, "here's Sun Dog County's little tin god."

The bartender scuttled to the upper end of the bar, out of line with the two men, and those at a card table behind Brick immediately lost all interest in their play and moved quickly. Brick was grinning and it irritated Santel.

"You, I'm talkin' to!" snarled Santel.

"To me?" Brick laughed. "Well, that's nice of yuh, Santel. I sure wondered who yuh meant, and I'm glad that Sun Dog likes me so well."

"Tha'sso?" Santel sneered. "You ain't got sense enough to know when yo're insulted."

"Have you insulted me?" questioned Brick wonderingly.

He turned his head and looked around the room, as if asking some one to confirm it. Hendricks caught his eye and tried to signal a warning. Silent moved in beside the bar and began rolling a cigaret, as if nothing was the matter. Santel shot a glance at Silent, and it seemed that the big man's unconcerned attitude irritated him.

Brick turned back to Santel—

"You didn't really mean to insult me, didja, Santel?"

"Well, I'll be —ed!" Santel's voice was hoarse with indignation. "Did I really mean it?"

Santel leaned forward until his face was within a foot of Brick, his hands spread out from his sides. His anger had made him forget that Brick was egging him on.

"You red-headed pup!"

Santel had evidently figured that Brick was afraid of him, but he was jerking back as he spoke; jerking back, as his right hand flashed for his gun. As quick as a cat

Brick shifted just a trifle, slashing out with his right hand; a cutting stroke with the side of his hand, which caught Santel just at the middle of his throat and made him lose immediate interest in his gun.

He straightened up, with both hands going to his throat, his face twisted with the agony of it, as he slithered along the edge of the bar.

"Ambulance on the job!" snorted Silent; and before any one could prevent him he stepped in, caught Santel with both hands, swung him over his shoulder and went striding out of the saloon.

The crowd rushed to the doorway and windows in time to see Silent step to the edge of the sidewalk and fairly hurl Santel into the street, where he rolled over and over.

"Hookum cow!" yelled Silent. "Yee-ow-w-w! Cowboy!"

Santel got slowly to his feet, but fell down once before he got himself steadied enough to stagger away across the street.

"Mebbe he don't know what it was all about," stated Silent, "but he's got sense enough to not come back for information."

"I never seen anythin' like it," declared a cowboy. "Brick hit him with the side of his hand. Right on the old apple. I'll betcha that jigger will have an apple-juice taste in his mouth for a month."

Hendricks congratulated Brick silently and Brick grinned.

"I seen yuh wig-waggin' me, Al. Santel was on the prod, eh?"

"He sure was, Brick. You ain't heard about what he found out, have yuh?"

"Grant was tellin' me, Al."

"What do yuh think of it?"

"Well," Brick grinned widely, "I feel suspicious of myself."

"I told Santel he was crazy."

"Thank yuh, Al."

"But look out for Santel, Brick. I don't know a thing about him, but I'll bet he won't forgive yuh."

"If he does, he's plumb loco. Anyway, I ain't lookin' for forgiveness. See yuh later, Al."

Brick and Silent went down to the livery-stable and found the gangling youth in charge, sitting in the office, playing a game of solitaire.

"Where's McKeever?" asked Brick.

"I dunno. I come to work at four o'clock, but he wasn't here."

"He didn't say where he was goin', did he?"

"He didn't say he was goin' anywhere. I suppose he got into a poker game and forgot he owned a livery-stable."

"He wasn't at the Short Horn." Thus Silent.

"Tha'sso? Didja look in at McGill's place? He plays over there once in a while."

"That's probably where he is," said Brick.

"Was it anythin' I can do for yuh, sheriff?"

"No-o-o, I guess not. I just wanted to ask Jimmy how one of his saddles happen to have a bullet-hole in the cantle."

"One of his saddles?" The youth squinted at Brick, as he lighted a limp-looking cigaret. "I didn't know about that."

"The saddle that Meecham rode today," explained Brick. "It's a cheap saddle—one of them red leather hulls, with a rawhide covered horn. Meecham was ridin' a Triangle 8 bay filly."

"Uh-huh?" The youth squinted thoughtfully. "I know the saddle and the bronc. Lemme see."

He led them out into the stable and examined the saddles, but was unable to find the right one. The bay filly was in a stall, and Brick knew it was the same animal that Meecham had ridden to Marlin City.

"I dunno where that —ed saddle is," declared the boy. "I know it. McKeever bought it from a mail-order catalog. One of the worst forks I ever set into. Cost about fifteen dollars, I reckon. Are you sure that's the horse he was ridin'?"

"That's the horse." Brick was positive.

"What about the bullet-hole? Been some shootin' goin' on?"

"Bullet-holes don't occur by themselves," grinned Brick. "We'll see if we can find Jimmy."

They left the stable and crossed the street, going past McGill's saloon, but there was no sign of McKeever. McGill was behind the bar, reading a newspaper, alone in the place. They went on up to the Short Horn, but found no trace of McKeever.

They asked the bartender, who said that he had not seen McKeever since about noon. At the Boston hotel, where McKeever lived, they were informed that he had not been around there since morning.

They went back to the Short Horn and had barely entered the place when the youth from the livery-stable followed them in. He was hatless, pasty-faced, and in

one hand he carried an old tin bucket.

"For —'s sake, come on!" he panted to Brick. "Come on with me! My —!"

He turned and ran out, with Brick and Silent close behind him. Several of those in the saloon, who had heard, followed them down the street.

Straight to the stable they went, and the boy stopped in the middle of the floor, under the light of a lantern.

"Tut-take the lantern," he faltered. "You go ahead, will yuh? Look in the grain box. My —!"

Brick grabbed the lantern and ran into the grain-room, a built-in room, adjoining the little office. A big grain-bin extended the full length of the room, with three different covers.

"That'n on the end!" panted the boy.

Brick lifted the cover and held up the lantern. Lying doubled up on some loose oats was Jimmy McKeever, his head a welter of blood. Silent and the men from the saloon crowded in and took a look.

"I—I ju-just found him that-a-way," explained the boy. "I dunno how I did it. We didn't use that bin any more. Sus-somethin' made me look in there, I reckon."

Brick fastened back the cover and climbed into the bin.

"One of yuh go after the doctor," he ordered, and a man hurried away.

Brick lifted McKeever up to where they could all get hold of him, and they placed him on the floor of the stable.

Brick examined him, while Silent knelt down and held the lantern.

"I don't reckon he needs a doctor," observed Silent.

Brick shook his head slowly.

"Don't look like it, that's a cinch. Somebody beat his head all up."

"Somebody—yeah." It was an old cattleman from the southern end of the range. "I'd admire to know jist who that somebody was."

The man who went after the doctor had shouted the news in at the Short Horn, and the stable soon filled with curious and interested people. Doctor Bridger came bustling in and the crowd gave him room. His examination was short and to the point.

"Been dead quite a while. Skull crushed. Who found him?"

Doctor Bridger was the coroner. The youth shouldered his way inside the circle.

"I found him, Doc. I—I thought he

was out some'rs, playin' poker, and I finds him in that danged old oat-bin. I told the sheriff jist as quick as I could."

"I reckon he did," agreed Brick. "He was still packin' his oat-can with him."

"But why would any one kill Jimmy McKeever?" Thus Banty Harrison indignantly. "Jimmy was a good guy."

"Didn't have an enemy that I ever heard about," offered Slim Hunter. "By gosh, this country is gettin' too salty to suit me. Mostly every day there's a robbery, a kill-in' or a dynamitin'. Makes a feller scared to do anythin', I tell yuh."

"Anything missing around here?" questioned the doctor. "It might have been done by a horse-thief."

"There ain't no horses gone," declared the boy.

He was about to mention the missing saddle, but Brick's eyes signaled him a warning and he turned away.

"Better take the body down to my place," suggested the doctor.

They rolled the body onto a blanket and four men carried it away. Brick and Silent left the stable ahead of the crowd, and were half-way to the Short Horn when the doctor joined them.

"Murder, wasn't it?" he asked.

"The dirtiest kind," said Brick slowly. "They probably put him in there until they got a chance to dispose of him."

The doctor shook his head wearily.

"I can't understand men doing a thing like that, sheriff. Murder is so unnecessary."

"From yore angle," said Brick softly.

They left the doctor and went to the hitch-rack, where they mounted and rode out of town. Just at the outskirts, Brick swung off the road and led the way into the hills, with Silent's horse pounding along behind him.

"Can't take a chance on the road," declared Brick, as the lights of Silverton faded from view. "There's too much — to pay in Sun Dog. We'll stay at the Nine-Bar-Nine tonight."



IT WAS about four o'clock the following afternoon. Brick and Silent crouched in the brush and watched the ranch-house of Mostano. They had been there since the middle of the forenoon, but had seen nothing of interest.

Their few hours of sleep at the Nine-Bar-Nine had only been an aggravation to Silent,

who complained wearily against accompanying a half-witted sheriff on a foolish quest. They had left the Nine-Bar-Nine before daylight, having cooked their own breakfast, and had ridden the entire distance away from the road.

Brick was taking no chances now, and he was forced to admit that his spying on the Mostano ranch was inspired by a "hunch." Something seemed to tell him that the answer to the riddle was at that ranch. He knew that Mostano was not the only man at the ranch when he and Harp were chased out of the house.

The dynamiting of his office proved that the criminals feared him and felt that he knew too much. Just why they would dynamite the Red Hill mine safe, after stealing the pay-roll, was more than he could figure out. In some way it was connected with the attempted killing of Soapy Caswell, he decided.

Perhaps, he thought, there was two different gangs, or they might have blown the safe to make him think that there were two different outfits working. He grinned as he thought of Santel's findings. Still, the descriptions covered the three of them. Baldy Malloy, Ike Welden and Meecham had all been robbed by men of the same description. Suddenly Brick laughed aloud and Silent looked at him curiously.

"What's so — ed funny?" Silent was tired and uncomfortable.

"Somethin'," Brick's brows were drawn in a thoughtful frown and the ball of his right thumb caressed the stubble on his chin. "Somethin' good, Silent."

"Oh, yeah," Silent turned away, squinted at the ranch-house and nudged Brick on the knee.

A man was riding toward the ranch-house on the bluff trail, and both of them knew that it was Santel. They watched him ride up to the front door and dismount. But before he had time to go to the door, Mostano came out.

"Now what the — is Santel doin' there?" queried Silent.

"That's a question," grinned Brick. "I wish my ears were as good as my eyes, 'cause I'd sure like to hear what they're sayin'."

After a few minutes of conversation they walked around the house and back to the corral. Mostano, judging from his gestures, was doing most of the talking. They

stopped at the corral gate and continued the conversation.

After a time Santel turned away and took several steps toward the house, as though going to leave, but turned. Mostano had stepped away from the corral, facing Santel. They were too far away for the two men in the brush to distinguish the detail of their movements, but just in front of Santel appeared a puff of smoke.

Mostano fell sidewise into the fence, trying to keep his feet. Another puff of smoke, and the closely spaced reports of two shots sounded. Brick and Silent could not see Mostano now, because he had fallen into the shadows of the pole corral.

Santel stood still for several moments, looking around, before he turned and hurried to the house. He knocked on the front door, but no one let him in. Then he stepped back, took a short run and hit the door with his shoulder. Brick grinned as Santel fell back. Brick knew that the oak bar was thick.

"He's goin' to smash the window," observed Silent.

Santel had picked up a short length of pole, and now he proceeded to demolish a front window. He made short work of it, tore the curtain away and crawled inside.

"What in —— is he doin' in there?" wondered Silent.

Brick shook his head and watched the house. In a few minutes Santel came out, looked around and mounted his horse. He did not seem to be in a hurry, but finally rode away up the bluff trail and disappeared toward the Red Hill mine.

"Well," said Silent dryly, "we've got another dead man."

"They're almost as common as live ones around here," said Brick sadly, his eyes glued on a certain patch of brush about a hundred feet to the east of the house. Something had caught his attention.

"Watch that patch of brush beyond the front of the house, Silent. There's somethin' there."

And as an answer to his statement a woman left the patch of brush and went swiftly out of sight on the far side of the house, only to reappear, going toward the corral.

Brick got to his feet and motioned for Silent to follow him. They went swiftly down through the brush and out into the open, where they ran toward the house. The woman had discovered Mostano's body

and was too interested to see anything else.

They ran past the house and out to the brush patch before the woman saw them. She ran toward them, stopped, as though undecided what to do and went back to the corral. Brick crashed into the brush and stopped short. Just at his feet was the entrance to a tunnel, and in this entrance lay the half-breed baby and—little Whizzer Malloy.

Silent crowded in beside Brick and stared at the children. Little Whizzer looked up at them, but there was no recognition in his face. His little feet were tied tightly together with a whang-leather string, and he was as dirty as a child could possibly become.

Brick lifted him out and cut the string. "Don'tcha know me, Whizzer?" he asked gently.

But the child only whimpered, his eyes filled with fear.

"My ——, I'll betcha they've treated him tough," declared Silent. "But how in —— did he happen to be here? Can yuh figure it out, Brick?"

Brick shook his head, his jaws shut tight. The half-breed woman was coming slowly toward them now, her shoulders drooped, her face set in lines of deep grief. She stopped in front of Brick, but would not look at him, as she said—

"My man dead—shot."

"Yeah, I know it," said Brick. "I reckon he had it comin'."

"He dead," she repeated.

"Where did you get this child?" asked Brick, not unkindly. He thought he could get more out of her by not adopting a threatening attitude. She looked blankly at him.

"Where did you get this boy?" he asked again. "You tell me where you get him."

"Don't know," she said slowly, blankly.

"You don't know? Come on now, tell me where yuh got him."

"Don' know."

"She sure is a good witness," observed Silent. "When her kind don't want to talk, they can sure ruin the parade. Ask her why Santel killed Mostano?"

"She don't know that either."

"Don' know," she muttered blankly. "My man dead—shot."

"Well, that's one thing she does know." Silent was inclined to sarcasm.

Little Whizzer Malloy whimpered and looked at Brick, as if trying to remember who Brick was.

"Don'tcha know me, Whizzer?" he asked.

But the child only looked blankly at him. Brick noticed that the little fellow had a bad bruise on the right side of his head and his right arm was painfully bruised.

"What the — was that hole over there?" Silent pointed back toward the brush patch.

"That's the tunnel that opens under the house," said Brick. "They had a slick get-away. When Santel showed up Mostano put the woman and kids into the tunnel and slid the bunk over the trap-door. No wonder Santel didn't find anythin'."

"What do yuh reckon he was lookin' for, Brick?"

Brick squinted at Silent and back toward the house.

"Does seem kinda funny, Silent. I'll betcha this woman would know—if she made a sneak with the kids."

"Don' know," persisted the woman blankly.

"Is there anythin' yuh do know?" snorted Silent.

She looked blankly at Silent and turned her gaze back toward the corral.

"My man dead," she said simply.

They walked over to the corral and looked at Mostano. Either of Santel's bullets would have killed him. Mostano's six-shooter was lying in the dust beside the corral, several feet away, proving that he had made an attempt to defend himself, but had dropped the gun as he fell.

"There ain't nothin' we can do for him," observed Brick, "so we'll just put the body in the house and take this kid back to Marlin."

Little Whizzer's legs had evidently been bound ever since he had disappeared, and they were too weak to support his body. They propped him against the fence, while they placed Mostano's body in the house, but made the woman accompany them.

"We'll send somebody out here," Brick told the woman, as they picked up Whizzer and started for their horses.

"Don' want nobody," she declared. "You keep away."

"Write yore own ticket," said Brick shortly, and walked away.

They got their horses and rode back toward Marlin City, with Brick carrying Whizzer in his arms. The youngster seemed to be trying to figure out what it was all about, and Brick grinned encouragingly.

"Don'tcha worry, Whizzer," he told him. "Yo're plenty safe now."

They crossed the hills and came out on the grade at the little trail, just south of where Baldy had gone over the bank with the stage. Whizzer had straightened up a little and seemed less dazed now; so Brick led the way back to where the stage had gone over.

The youngster looked around, as though he recognized the spot, and finally looked up at Brick.

"Where's my daddy?" he asked.

"For the love of mud!" exclaimed Silent. "He's rememberin'."

"Do yuh remember the stage, Whizzer?" asked Brick. "Remember what happened the day you rode with your daddy?"

"I fell off," Whizzer's eyes were round and excited.

"Yuh did?"

"Yeah!" He looked around. "I fell off on the road. Where did my daddy go?"

"And then somebody picked yuh up," prompted Brick, ignoring the question.

"Who picked yuh up, Whizzer?"

"I hurt my head. Somebody shoot a gun."

"Didja see anybody before yuh fell off the wagon?"

Whizzer shook his head.

"I hear the gun shoot and then I fall off. Where's my daddy?"

"Whizzer, old-timer," said Brick earnestly, "you've got to remember some things for me. After yuh fell off the stage you hurt yore head. When you woke up, who did yuh see?"

Whizzer's forehead puckered, as he stared at Brick.

"I seen two mans in house. One man got somethin' on his face, like stage-robber. Woman and baby there."

"One man was masked, eh? It wasn't the Indian man, was it?"

Whizzer shook his head and looked around quickly.

"Don'tcha be afraid of him," said Brick. "He's dead."

"He hit me," said Whizzer simply. "They make me stay in the mine and I can't git out."

He began crying softly, still terrified at what he had experienced in the few days. Brick swore softly and hugged the youngster.

"Don't cry, buddy," he said. "Ain't nobody goin' to hurt yuh ag'in, y'betcha."

They swung their horses around and galloped away toward town.

"Do yuh think Santel done it, Brick?" queried Silent, as they swept along the grade.

"I dunno, Silent. Me and Harp met Santel just below here that day. Anyway, he knows somethin' about it, and I'm goin' to find out what he knows, if I have to drill him plumb full of lead to let the information leak out."

Whizzer was asleep when they rode up to Wesson's home and dismounted. Mrs. Wesson met Brick at the door, and gasped with surprize at sight of his burden. Whizzer woke up and began crying, but the sleep had refreshed him and he quit crying, as soon as he realized that he was no longer in the tunnel.

In a few words Brick explained how they had found him, and in less time than that Mrs. Wesson had placed him at the table behind a big bowl of bread and milk. He ate ravenously, while Mrs. Wesson sat across the table from him, her eyes filled with tears, and promised him a nice warm bath and a soft bed.

"Gotta find my daddy," he told her. "They didn't give me no bread and milk."

"What did they give yuh, honey?" asked Mrs. Wesson.

Whizzer swallowed a big portion of bread, almost choking over it.

"They gimme —," he said simply.

"Yuh can't beat him, can yuh?" grinned Brick. "He's a buckaroo."

"I lost m' spur. Mebbe—" he smiled at Brick—"mebbe my daddy's got it. He said he was goin' to git me 'nother one."

"Where's Harp?" asked Silent.

"Him and Miss Miller went to the dance at Silverton," smiled Mrs. Wesson. "Harp had a sweet time squarin' himself with her, but he made Brick out to be the biggest liar in the State—and she believed him. By jinks, I think she likes him. Human nature is one queer thing. I'll betcha Leach will be sore as a boil. He sure did want to go with her."

Whizzer laid aside his spoon and sighed deeply.

"Had enough, buddy?" asked Brick.

"Uh-huh. I can't hold no more."

"Now I'll give him a good hot bath and put him into a nice bed," said Mrs. Wesson. "Mebbe we better have the doctor over to fix up them bruises, Brick. He's sure been skinned awful bad."

"Don't hurt." Whizzer shook his head.

"That's fine, buddy," nodded Brick. "Now if yuh could only tell us what that masked man looked like."

Whizzer shook his head.

"Dunno. He had a cloth on his face."

"But his clothes, Whizzer. Wasn't there somethin' yuh could remember? Somethin' about how he looked?"

Whizzer shook his head. Brick lighted a cigaret and studied the youngster.

"Sleepy, Whizzer?"

"Nope. Say, when do I find my daddy?"

Brick sighed and shook his head sadly. He did not want to tell him now. Silent swore softly and counted the cartridge-heads in his belt.

"Want to take a ride to Silverton, buddy?" queried Brick.

"Sure." Whizzer hopped off his chair and almost fell down. "My feet don't feel good," he told Brick. "They ache."

"Oh, I wouldn't take him plumb down there, Brick." Thus Mrs. Wesson quickly. "He needs a bath and some good sleep."

"I know it, Ma," nodded Brick, "but I've got to take him. It might be kinda hard on Whizzer, but he'll pull through."

"Sure," nodded Whizzer. "I'll go."

Mrs. Wesson grumbled to herself, as she wrapped him up in a light blanket. She knew that Brick must have a good reason for taking the youngster to Silverton; but she did want to clean him up a little.

"Lemme carry him," begged Silent. "I've got a strong horse, and it takes a strong horse to carry two cowpunchers."

"Sure," agreed Whizzer. "I lost m' spur, yuh know."

"Yuh can have both of mine," offered Silent, as Brick handed the youngster up to him.

"Oh, good! If daddy gives me one, I'll have three. Mebbe he won't though."

"Mebbe not," said Silent softly.



A DANCE in Silverton was almost a county affair. They had the largest hall in the county and boasted of the best orchestra. The dance usually began about eight o'clock in the evening and rarely ever ended before eight o'clock the following morning.

And it was not strange on this night that every bit of space in the livery-stable was taken and practically every inch of space at the several hitch-racks was occupied. It was also a big night for the games at the

Short Horn saloon, as every cowpuncher made it a point to borrow or draw enough money to make the trip worth while.

Already the rasping notes of a fiddler tuning his instrument filtered out through the open windows of the big upstairs dance-hall across the street from the Short Horn saloon. Cowpunchers, suffering in celluloid collars, tight boots, and exuding odors of Jockey Club and cologne, were at the bar; trying to appear at ease, as if this sartorial splendor were nothing unusual.

From somewhere Slim Hunter had procured an old dress coat, which exhibited a vast expanse of his red-and-green-striped shirt, and did not blend well with his light blue trousers and yellow boots. Banty Harrison, sans vest, but with a great, striped Ascot tie, was perspiring freely, trying to keep the thing on his collar. But no one criticized their apparel. Every one was there to have a good time, regardless of clothes.

Men shouted at each other and flung their money on the bar or across the green cloth, while the roulette-wheel whizzed and the dealer's voices blended into the babel of voices. Harp had left Miss Miller to the tender mercies of some Silverton ladies and had invaded the Short Horn for a nerve elixir.

Grant, Hendricks and Leach were at the bar when Harp came in, and Grant went directly to him.

"Where's Brick?" he asked.

Harp shook his head and gave his orders to the busy bartender.

"I dunno, Bill."

"When did yuh see him last, Harp?"

Harp rubbed his nose thoughtfully. Leach had moved in close enough to listen in on the conversation; so Harp did not answer. He took his drink and drew Grant away from the bar, leaving Leach with Hendricks.

"I dunno where he is," declared Harp. "He didn't come home last night. I never knowed that McKeever was killed until late today."

"Got any idea where he is, Harp?"

"Not a danged idea. Him and Silent sneaked away from me yesterday, and I ain't seen 'em since."

"It's kinda funny," mused Grant. "They wanted to hold an inquest over McKeever today, but they had to put it off until Brick and Silent showed up. Do yuh suppose they ran into somethin'?"

"Who seen 'em last here?"

"Doctor Bridger. He saw them ride out of town."

"Uh-huh," Harp squinted reflectively. "Well, I dunno, Bill."

Leach walked up to them and spoke directly to Grant.

"Well, does he know anything about them, Grant?"

Grant shook his head and looked at Harp who was looking curiously at Leach. Harp grinned softly. He could afford to grin now, because he knew that Leach had seen him bring Miss Miller to Silverton.

"Seems funny that the sheriff would avoid the inquest," said Leach. "Perhaps he had a reason for not wantin' to be here."

"I'll betcha he did," said Harp. "Brick usually has a good reason for doin' things."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah. Yuh see, Brick ain't no detective—he's a man-hunter."

"Man-hunter?" Leach laughed sarcastically. "Who did he ever catch?"

"You better read local hist'ry," advised Harp.

"Brick got a few of 'em," nodded Grant.

"History, eh?" Leach grinned. "I suppose he has had it all written out and bound in books."

"All except the last chapter," said Harp seriously. "He's writin' that now, I reckon."

Leach laughed and walked away.

"He don't like yoo, Harp," smiled Grant.

"By golly, that just about breaks me all up, Bill. When I look at him and know he don't like me, I just tremble with emotion. Yes sir, it's just like havin' a chill. Yuh goin' to the dance?"

"No, I don't think so. I ain't dressed for dancin'."

"Yuh might borrow Slim Hunter's coat. He looks just like one of them there doctor's charts, which shows yore insides, after yore kinda opened up that-a-way. That shirt sure does correspond to them colored heart, liver and lung things."

Banty Harrison came shoving his way past, but stopped to shake hands with Harp.

"Let's go over and dance, Harp," he panted. "It's too danged hot in here. I'm goin' to git a string, if I can find one, and tie this imported necktie to the top button of my pants. Dang anybody that would sell a tie like this. Yuh got to be a civil engineer to even tie it. C'mon."

"Won't she stay down, Banty?" queried Harp.

"Stay ——! Every time I start talkin' and kinda wigglin' my throat, the darned thing comes up and bumps my lower lip."

Hank Stagg came past them and went to the bar. He was already half-drunk and talking loud. Ike Weldon joined him at the bar, but Weldon was still sober. Santel came in and walked past them, his eyes sweeping the smoke-filled room. Hank called to him, asking him to have a drink, but Santel either did not hear him or did not want to drink with him.

"There'll be —— to pay before mornin'," declared Banty. "Yuh can't put a gang like that together, along with plenty of hooch, and not have trouble. Whisky and six-guns don't mix. —— this necktie!"

"Why don'tcha pin it down to yore shirt?"

"Yeah—and have it pull my shirt off, eh? Harp, you ain't got no idea of the —— in this necktie. What I need is a collar with a pistol-grip finish instead of this ——ed slick thing."

"Cowboys goin' to a dance, eh?" Slim Hunter stopped to look them over.

"Introducin' to you," said Harp seriously, "the effect of tobacco and alcohol on the intestines."

"Jist when do I laugh?" asked Slim.

"Next time yuh go to the bar."

"Uh-huh," Slim grinned and went on. He had no idea what Harp meant.

"What'll make him laugh when he goes to the bar?" queried Banty.

"He'll be facin' the bar," said Harp wearily, "and the back-bar mirror ought to show him what I meant."

"Haw, haw, haw! Aw, —— this tie! Can't even laugh. C'mon and help me find a guy-robe. By golly, I won't stand for my own clothes slappin' me in the mouth."

They crossed the street and procured a length of string at a general store, with which they secured the tie to a suspender button, much to Banty's delight. Then they went upstairs into the dance hall, where the floor was rapidly filling for the first quadrille.

It was possibly an hour later when Brick and Silent dismounted at the hitch-rack across the street from the Short Horn saloon. Whizzer had slept nearly all the way, but he was awake now and Silent turned him over to Brick.

The music had just stopped in the dance-hall, and a number of men were straggling across the street toward the Short Horn,

laughing and talking. Brick heard Harp's voice, arguing with somebody over the proper way to hold down a necktie.

"C'mon," said Brick softly.

He hoisted little Whizzer up on his shoulder and walked boldly into the saloon. The place was filled with men, hazy with tobacco smoke. Brick shoved his way to the bar and stood Whizzer on its polished top.

It was several moments before any one recognized the youngster, who was looking them over with his wide, brown eyes. It was Mose LaCledde, the big trapper, who made the discovery, and his voice boomed loudly above the roar of the conversation:

"By ——! De los' boy! Look! I'm be a —— liar, if it ain't de leetle boy 'imself."

The roar of conversation broke abruptly. It was not a slowing down, but a sudden silence. Even the whirr of the roulette and the rattle of poker-chips was stilled, as the crowd stared at the little overall-clad, dirty-faced youngster on the bar, who was looking at them.

There was a cleared space of several yards between Brick and the crowd. Silent had halted nearer the door. Brick could see Santel in the crowd. Hank Stagg was at the bar, just beyond Brick, staring wide-eyed at the youngster.

And before any one could voice a question Leach came striding in past Silent, but stopped quickly, wondering at the silence. He turned his eyes and saw little Whizzer. Meecham, well-dressed, came in, glanced quickly at the crowd and stopped almost against Silent.

"Well, I'll be ——ed, if it ain't the kid!" exclaimed Bill Grant. "Where did yuh find him, Brick?"

But Brick did not reply. He was watching Whizzer.

"Baldy Malloy's kid, eh?" Leach's voice sounded as if he were suffering from a cold.

A man laughed, and Brick glanced in that direction to see Ike Weldon standing up in a chair against the wall. Ike was partly drunk. Brick's sweeping glance included Santel, who was leaning forward, his face tense, shoulders hunched.

"Take her easy, Brick."

It was Harp speaking from the far end of the bar. He knew that trouble was coming. A man began crying. It was Hank Stagg. Perhaps it was from the effect of liquor—perhaps not. Meecham started to back away, but Silent blocked him.

Leach forced a smile and moved slightly closer. Whizzer was staring at Leach and now he grasped Brick's shoulder.

"Don't let him touch me!" The childish treble sounded loud in the silence of the room.

Leach stopped.

"Why not, Whizzer?" Brick's lips barely moved and he did not turn his head. "Are yuh afraid of him, buddy?"

"He's got warts on his hands! And there's the frog on his holster!"

"Warts? Frog?"

Brick's eyes shifted to Leach's hands, which were turned away, as if Leach were trying to conceal them. But he could not conceal the holster, on which was the leaping-frog design in silver. Perhaps it was the symbol of a swift draw.

Leach's face had gone white, his jaw tensed. Hank Stagg's sobs were the only audible noise, except the heavy breathing of the crowd.

"Tell us about it, Buddy," said Brick softly. "He ain't goin' to hurt yuh."

"He's got warts on his hands," repeated the little fellow. "The man had 'em—the man who wore the cloth over his face—and he had the frog on his holster. Frogs make warts, don'tcha know it? I don't like warts—and he's got 'em."

The little fellow, in spite of his treatment, had seen the warty hands and the leaping frog, and they had impressed him so strongly that there was no chance of a mistake.

"Good boy," breathed Brick, and then a little louder, "Bartender, will yuh please put this boy on yore side of the bar?"

The frightened drink-dispenser shuffled down behind Brick, lifted the youngster down and went quickly back to the farther end of the bar. Leach laughed. Somewhere a handful of poker-chips slid from a table and rattled to the floor.

"What's it all about, anyway?" demanded Leach.

Brick leaned back against the bar. His face was drawn, blue, in that weak light, and he seemed tired. But those who knew him well, knew that he was dangerous now. The light-hearted, devil-may-care Brick Davidson was gone, and in his place was the sheriff of Sun Dog, a man-hunter—not a detective.

"It took quite a while," Brick's voice was pitched low, but plainly audible to

every one in the room. "Sometimes things take a long time to work out. A lot of yuh don't know that Baldy Malloy was shot through the heart before he went over the grade. I knew it, Doctor Meyers knew it, and Grant and Santel knew it. I reckon it's been kept sort of a secret.

"I reckon that Baldy was shot because he bucked against doin' any more crooked work. It kinda looks like Baldy wanted to go straight on account of his little kid; but they couldn't let him get away, 'cause he felt indebted to me for savin' his kid."

"You ain't guessin' everythin', are yuh, Brick?" queried Bill Grant anxiously.

"Not all of it. A lot of it is guess-work, Bill; but I'll bet my life that I'm close to the bull's-eye. It's a funny thing—" Brick shifted slightly and a grin passed his lips—"we've had several robberies, which never occurred. Baldy Malloy was held up, Ike Welden was held up, and the Silverton bank was robbed.

"The robbers in each case were described as bein' the same men. And the funny part of it all is the fact that the descriptions cover me, Harp Harris and Silent Slade. Nobody seen 'em, except Baldy Malloy, Ike Welden and Meecham. Gents, those robberies never occurred."

"The — they didn't!" Ike Welden's voice squeaked like a discordant fiddle. "What in — do you know about it?"

"Why—why, that is ridiculous," faltered Meecham.

"And you better stay where yuh are," warned Silent, as Meecham moved slightly backward.

"Baldy Malloy's shack caught fire just before the bank robbery," continued Brick. "Everybody went to the fire. It sure was a good chance to rob the bank."

"Just what is all this conversation about?" queried Leach.

He folded his arms and squinted at Brick, trying to cover his nervousness.

Brick laughed at him—with his mouth; the rest of his face tensed, serious. The crowd shifted audibly.

"Mebbe yuh don't get the drift of it, Leach," said Brick. "I'll start a little further back in hist'ry and give yuh a chance to foller me.

"It began in Idaho."

Leach jerked slightly and his eyes flashed to Hank Stagg, who was slouched at the bar, looking down at the floor. Hank had

stopped crying now and his thumbs were hooked over his cartridge-belt.

"Some folks got to understand each other—in Idaho," continued Brick. "One of 'em came to Sun Dog and got in kinda solid. He made money, I reckon. But all the time he was lookin' for bigger money; so he got them Idaho folks to migrate down here, and they formed kind of a little corporation to loot Sun Dog.

"It sure worked, too. But they got scared of the sheriff's office. The big haul wasn't pulled yet, and they wanted to keep me quiet until that was cinched; so they imported a detective to handle the mystery."

Every eye in the place flashed to Santel, but he never moved. His eyes were watching Leach. Even Brick's statement did not seem to impress him.

"They got him in Idaho, too," said Brick softly. "He was known as a killer in that country. There's prob'ly several sheriffs up there that would like to put handcuffs on him."

But even the direct accusation did not affect Santel. Men moved away from him, but he remained as immovable as a statue.

"I kinda blame myself for Soapy Caswell gettin' shot," said Brick. "Yuh see, I lied about that hold-up. I told 'em down here that Soapy got through to the Red Hill mine with the twenty-seven thousand-dollar pay-roll, when I knew better.

"It must 'a' been that Soapy got hold of a dummy pay-roll, and that the gang couldn't get in touch with the man who was to pull off the job to see if he had failed; so they shot Soapy and blew the mine safe to try and save themselves. They thought that I knew it was a dummy pay-roll and that I could trace 'em through the man who fixed up the dummy for Soapy; so they dynamited my office and burned half of the town of Marlin."

Santel laughed hollowly, as if greatly amused. Leach shot a glance at Santel and his hands dropped to his sides.

"Didn't trust me, eh?" said Santel.

"I seen you shoot Mostano today, Santel," said Brick.

"Yeah." Santel nodded, but did not look at Brick. "What about the frog on the holster? What did the kid mean?"

"He remembered that much," said Brick tensely. "When his dad was shot and the stage swung off the grade, Whizzer was

dumped off onto the grade. He was kinda badly hurt, but he remembers hearin' the shot fired. The man who fired the shot wore a mask, but the kid remembers that he had a frog on his holster."

"Leach!" Santel spat the name. "—you, I thought you was the one!"

As Santel spoke he whipped out his gun. But Leach was not caught napping, and two guns thundered almost at the same time. There was only a short space between them—too short for either of them to miss. It was all being done in split-second time.

Brick felt the burning shock of a bullet into the muscles of his left arm, which staggered him back against the bar; but his gun came up and he fired at Ike Welden, who was standing on the chair shooting at him. Leach was falling into Brick, who fended him away with his gun-hand. Santel was on his hands and knees, coughing his life away, and Silent, with Meecham clutched in a wrestling grip, came crashing down in the middle of the floor.

Ike Welden was still on his feet, trying to pull the trigger, a vacant look on his face, as he leaned against the wall. The crowd had scattered like a covey of frightened quail. Some of them were flat on the floor, several were behind the bar, and many of them had faded out through the rear exit.

Hank Stagg was the only one who did not show fight. He still leaned against the bar, dazed, half-crying. The shooting had ceased now. Harp stepped away from the far end of the bar, a smoking gun in his hand, and stared at Ike Welden, who seemed asleep, standing up in the chair.

"He's dead, Brick," said Harp in an awed voice. "He's dead, but won't lay down."

Then Hank Stagg suddenly came to life. With an animal-like scream he sprang away from the bar, drawing his gun, and whirling on Brick, only to be met with a bullet that caused him to spin on his heel, and a second later he went crashing to the floor, with Harp on his back.

Brick backed against the bar and looked at the wreckage. Leach was sprawled on his face, arms outstretched; Silent was sitting on the prostrate figure of Meecham, while Harp sat on Hank Stagg and tried to find out just how badly hurt his victim was. Santel was still on his hands and knees, but now he sat down, supporting himself with one arm, while he tried to brush the mists away from his muddled brain.

The crowd came drifting back in, questioning, wondering, coughing from the fumes of burnt powder, which clouded the room.

There was silence, as the crowd realized the tragedy which had just been enacted. Came a crash, as Ike Welden fell from his standing position on the chair, and the crowd started to duck for cover again.

"He decided to quit," said Harp blandly. "Takes some folks a long time to find out anythin'."

Santel looked around the circle of faces until he found Brick. He seemed dazed, sick, but his voice was still strong enough.

"Much obliged, Davidson," he said. "I was in on the deal, but you found out more than I could. Leach had me come here to keep you from investigating. He wanted me to kill yuh." Santel hesitated, forcing a grin. "I suppose I would, if they hadn't killed Baldy Malloy."

"They offered me a thousand dollars to force yuh into a gun-fight, and I—I fell down on the job. I'm glad I did—now."

"I held up you and Soapy Caswell. That was a dummy sack. They didn't trust me. Meecham fixed it up. They took a — of a big chance, didn't they? Leach wanted to loot Sun Dog, just like you said. Baldy and Ike Welden robbed themselves, and then Ike set the fire that day, while Meecham hid the bank money."

"They all gave the same description. Leach thought it might put you three fellers in bad—and he wanted to elect Hank Stagg. Leach wanted too much, I reckon. I—I never got my split of the money, but it's in the cellar of Meecham's house. Welden set the dynamite off under your office, and Hank Stagg shot Soapy Caswell."

"Meecham was out there the night you found Mostano killin' the beef, and one of your bullets hit his saddle. He came huntin' for me to find out about the payroll. I don't know who killed the livery-stable keeper, but it was some of the gang. They didn't want you to question him about the bullet-hole in the saddle."

"Thank yuh, Santel," said Brick weakly. "That all proves that I'm a good guesser. But I don't know yet why yuh killed Leach."

Santel smiled softly and his eyes wandered around the circle of interested faces.

"Some of yuh take care of the kid, will

yuh?" His voice was weaker now. "Baldy was my brother. I—I took the name of Santel, because I was no good—a killer. Baldy must 'a' been led into doin' wrong. They named the kid after me—Whizzer. Hank knew this, but Leach didn't until later—and he was afraid I'd find it out. I killed Mostano today, but I couldn't find the kid."

"By golly, that's where the resemblance came in, Brick," exclaimed Harp. "Little Whizzer looks like Santel."

"I'll take care of Whizzer," said Brick.

"We'll all take care of Whizzer," amended Silent. "Don'tcha never worry about that, Santel."

Santel nodded as if satisfied, and little Whizzer came out from behind the bar, his eyes wide with fright, and ran to Brick.

"Geeminy gosh!" he shrilled. "Is all that shootin' over?"

"It's all over, buddy," said Brick weakly. "There ain't goin' to be no more shootin'—not for a while, I hope."

"I hope there never will be again," said Santel slowly. "It don't pay."

He swayed sidewise on his hands and sank down on his face.

"When do I see my daddy?" asked Whizzer impatiently.

Brick drew the youngster to him with his one good arm, and looked around at the crowd, as if appealing to them for an answer.

"You better see a doctor, Brick," advised Harp. "You're losin' a lot of blood."

"Ain't nobody goin' to tell me where my dad is?" demanded Whizzer. "Is he out on his trip?"

"Yeah, he's out on his trip," whispered Brick.

Whizzer turned his head and looked out through the open door into the darkness. He knew that his father always came home before dark. His eyes came back to Brick, as he said—

"He must be takin' a long trip this time."

"Yeah, a long trip, buddy," breathed Brick.

There was a silence. Then—

"Aw-w-w, — the luck!"

It was Banty Harrison. Tears were trickling down his cheeks and his lips trembled. He started angrily toward the door, but turned and looked back at the crowd.

"Wh-what's the matter?" choked Harp.

Banty pointed at his flopping necktie, which had crawled up above the top of his celluloid collar.

"That — string busted—that's what's the matter."

The rest of them had no alibi. But the

looting of Sun Dog was over and they looked at each other unashamed, while Brick, with Whizzer clinging to his one good hand, went hunting for a doctor, and the orchestra across the street struck up a waltz.

Plants on LIFE

by Bill Adams

One Small Dog

A MAN is not a man if he takes any pride to himself for a job accomplished; because, it seems to me, that no man has accomplished his job till he has done the next job after it when that job is done; and then gone yet again on to the next. It seems to me that there can not be satisfaction in the soul of a man as long as there is any work to do at all—and work there will always be, for we are not as gods. We are human, thank goodness, and our fight is up-hill. Anybody can roll a bundle of dirty washing down a steep sidewalk, but we'd rather be able to carry a clean bundle up the wintry hill; leaving it at it's appointed doorstep.

I don't know.

I'm a kid—nothing more or less. I don't know anything at all. I'm not sure that I want to learn anything at all, either. The world is so full of wise men, professors, preachers, pedlers of wares of whose worth they are all too certain. Now I'd sooner go out to the little roadways any day and bending down to some urchin ask for the secret of life from him or from her. They look straight up into one's eyes, you know, and a smile breaks over their small faces and they hold you up their broken toy, asking you, complete stranger to them though you be, to mend it. Well, I've asked a lot of grown-ups to mend broken things of mine—unavailingly. They don't seem to carry the secret, often. They've got too much pride in their grown-upness, and are too busy spreading their supposed wisdom to be able to stay and play with a child.

I had a lovely time with a dog once. He was about four months old—just about my own age. I was about thirty-two, as men figure years.

Well, I was going to work one morning when I saw him playing on a lawn, and I gave him the high sign, that all dogs know. It's easy to fool a man but it's a pretty hard thing to fool a dog. They know a man who loves them and means them well, as a general thing. He came with me to work. I was foreman of a gang of thirty or forty fruit-pickers. Friend pup took a seat on my sweater when I threw it on the ground beside a tree. The first man passing who trod on the edge of the sweater jumped as far as he was physically able to jump. Friend pup went for his leg.

Two days later a minister of the Gospel came to my house, saying he understood that I had his dog.

"Oh," says I, "is he yours? I beg your pardon—take him along."

Meanwhile friend pup arrived around the corner of the house and seeing friend minister of friend Gospel stuck every hair on his little back straight up and bared his teeth.

Whose dog was he?

Well; he had to go back with the man who owned him. The man moved far away; taking the pup with him; and the pup went away to look for me, and never found me—a lost dog! Friend minister of the Gospel didn't seem to care at all when I next met him, telling me quite casually that he couldn't keep the dog at home. Friend Gospel man was busy saving souls from hunger and destruction, but I still see that little dog trotting sadly along the roads, looking for me, dying perhaps in a ditch—dying of love.

"How white are the dead dog's teeth."

I don't like to see either man or dog hunger for a real home, a friend who understands him—and have to go without.

Queer Fish



by
Douglas Oliver

Author of "To 'Bugs'—and Butterflies," and "The Comeback."

FAT FLEMING had the floor. "I'm tellin' you birds," he was saying, "I've had enough of this canned rabbit. The cooks have been slappin' it to us every day we've been out here in Wangy and we're due for more of the stuff. I'm sick of it, doggone it. Give me horse. Give me anything but that Australian cat. Gosh! I believe I could meow."

"Rusty" Radford called from beneath his blankets:

"Don't be so blamed partic'lar, Fat. You're a reg'lar 'common-sewer' on grub, you are."

A roar of laughter greeted the brick-top's sally. Fat Fleming went a beety color. He shook his fist Radford's way, exclaiming—

"Aw, go to —"

Rusty Radford's off-key soprano piped interruption.

"The bells o' hell go *ting-a-ling-a-ling* for you but not for me."

In a minute every man of the dozen H. Q. runners were bellowing the army ditty.

"*Ting-a-ling*," they sang to the accompaniment of spoons upon mess-tins.

Fleming stuck his fingers in his ears, got redder and redder, puffed out with indignation till it seemed he might blow up. Finally he threw up his hands *kamerad* fashion.

"Cease fire," ordered Rusty Radford shrilly.

The chorus died with a resounding "*ling*." Fat Fleming gulped once or twice, fumbled with his worn belt and dragged to view a handful of ragged paper.

"Six hundred francs," he drawled.

A buzz of speculation flitted from lip to lip in the old cellar.

"Money talkin'?" enquired some one.

"You guessed it, friend," said Fat. Holding the "rags" aloft, Fat triumphantly resumed: "An' this noble six hundred says that Fat Fleming is through with rabbit for all time—that Fat Fleming will forage his own grub and do his own cookin' from now on. An' if I don't make your mouths water at 'dinner-up' tomorrow the six hundred's yours."

"Fair bet," declared Rusty Radford.

"What say, gang?"

"Jakealoo," approved the gang.

One by one the bunch turned in. One by one the candles went out. For a long time Fat Fleming lay awake debating his plan of procedure. Presently a low whisper reached his ears.

"Fat! Hello, Fat."

"That you, Rusty?"

"Sure."

"Whassamatter?"

"Slip over here—want to talk to you."

Fat picked his way carefully among the sleeping runners. Soon he was huddled down on the straw rubbing shoulders with Rusty, his pal.

After awhile, Rusty, as he had intimated, began to talk, in a guarded whisper.

"D'ever strike you, Fat," he said, "that there's somethin' queer 'bout this town we're in—this Wangy?"

"Whatd'youmean?"

"The way Fritz passes it up? Listen to that!"

Fat listened. A few feet distant some fellow snored a noisy baritone.

"Reg'lar gran' op'ra," chuckled Fat.

"Naw—not that. Listen!"

Again Fat strained his ears. From far away came the buzz-saw whine of engines.

"Fritzle over," said Fat.

"You bet," agreed Rusty. "An' listen."

Grrrrrum! Grrrrrum! Grrrrrum!

Sounds of dropping bombs crept up to them from the distance.

"Big stuff," avowed Fat. "Arras gettin' — again tonight."

"That's just it," said Rusty.

"Just what?"

"Arras gettin' —, an' a dozen other places gettin' —, and Wangy gettin' the go-by. Funny, ain't it?"

"Can't see it," asserted Fat. "Look at Bethune."

"Yah, but Bethune's full of civvies. Even at that Fritz tosses a few navals into the square now and then. But Wangy—well, Wangy's a darn sight closer to the front line than Bethune ever dreamed of bein'—and there ain't a civvy here. Yet hanged if I can remember when the dump's been shot up."

"But you forget," argued Fat, "the C. O. preachin' to us last week on the methodical Hun. How he works on a clock-work system—never pulls the unexpected. Mebbe Fritz figures he wouldn't be runnin' true to form if he was to start in bangin' Wangy again. He's laid off the place so long he's forgotten how, mebbe."

"Mebbe so," said Rusty, "but I'm afraid—some day——"

"Some day—what?" Fat broke in.

"That Fritz'll catch us nappin' here."

Over in the corner a red-hot tongue came to life with:

"Stop that gabbing, you asses. Go'n' pound your ear."

"Better flop," Fat suggested.

"I guess so."

"G'night, Rusty."

"G'night, Fat."



FAT FLEMING woke up worrying.

Not that the possible loss of his bet would mean much in his young life. But Fat's stomach had actually rebelled against the daily rabbit diet. He had meant what he said. He would have no more of the stuff. Yet turning it down meant falling back on bread and tea and the odd cheese and the occasional jam. To his way of thinking bread and tea and so forth weren't muscle builders. No, sir! They weren't. And—muscle was needed on his job—lot of it. The situation was an awkward one. He'd just have to dig up something better. But how? And where?

Inspection over found him still puzzling. It was with a sort of relief that he jumped at the adjutant's whistle. The officer's orders were—

"Locate the town major and make billeting arrangements for one hundred other ranks arriving reinforcements tonight."

Runners never traveled singly, so Fat took a peek in the cellar as he went by. He found Rusty Radford, off duty, prone on his stomach, scribbling a letter home. Glancing over the brick-top's shoulder, he read:

The shells are flying overhead and we can hardly breathe the gas is that thick——

"War's — here, ain't it?" kidded Fat.

Rusty scrambled to his feet and made a pass at the grinning face of his friend. Fat ducked—and begged Radford to lay his scribbling aside and come along.

Rusty came and the street without soon echoed to the pound of their hob-nailed boots. A ten-minute hike through deserted alleys brought them to the skeleton of a red-brick home sitting well back from the street. Part of the slate roof had been dished in—the work of some ancient shell. The doorway was sagging. Glass had long gone from the latticed windows. Yet traces of its original prettiness remained. Up the east wall of the skeleton pink ramblers grew. Dahlia-clumps, soon to bloom, bordered the slag walk leading up from the street to the doorway. Grass, green and fresh, thrived in patches about the yard.

"Some home," appraised Fat as the two runners headed up the walk. "Wonder if the major's home?"

Evidently he wasn't. Their insistent hammering brought no response. To the immediate right of the door hung a placard:

OFFICE OF TOWN MAJOR AND AREA COMMANDANT

Apply Within

Fat gave it a brief glance, then whipped his bayonet from its scabbard. The point he inserted between the jamb and the door.

"What'you doin'?" asked Rusty.

"Applyin' within," answered Fat.

"We'll get the dickens for this, but—I'm with you," said Rusty.

The boys threw their weight against the panels. The door protested with a creaking from the massive lock—then gave. Fat and Rusty catapulted within.

"Hello, major," Fleming called out lustily.

No reply—save the rustling of loose paper on the crumbling walls.

"Oh, major," trumpeted Radford, his hands cupped to his mouth.

"Like a graveyard," said Fat.

They poked out into the kitchen. Heaped on the square table were traces of that morning's meal—dirty dishes and crusts of bread about which flies were buzzing. Close at hand stood an odd-looking receptacle.

"Looks like an ice-box," said Fat. "It's home-made enough. Prob'ly where the major keeps his liquor."

Rusty was squinting down through a crack in the top of the receptacle.

"Take a peek, Fat," he said. "Look at them queer fish in there."

Fat peeked.

"By gosh," he enthused, "they are fish—an' a dinner fit for the king. Here's where I win my bet, Rusty. Here's where I hang the crape on you and those other misfits. Watch my speed this dinner-hour. Let me at them fish, boy."

He was tugging at his bayonet when the *thump* sounded. A bit of ceiling plaster, just above his head, gave way, hung swaying by a thread, then slithered to the floor. Fat had bounced to one side like a bit of India rubber.

"Holy smoke," he ejaculated. His face was working strangely. "Heads up, here, Rusty," he hissed.

But Rusty was wide awake. He had jerked a clip from his pouches—already. There was a metallic click as he thumbed the cartridges into his Enfield's magazine. The bolt shot home.

"It was up-stairs—that *thump*," he whispered.

Step by step they took the wobbly stairs. In the third room they explored they found evidence of recent visitation. An old stove—lids still warm—was in one corner. Two old biscuit-box chairs occupied the middle stage. Laid across them was what seemed a work-bench. On the floor, beneath the bench, lay an ordinary flat-iron.

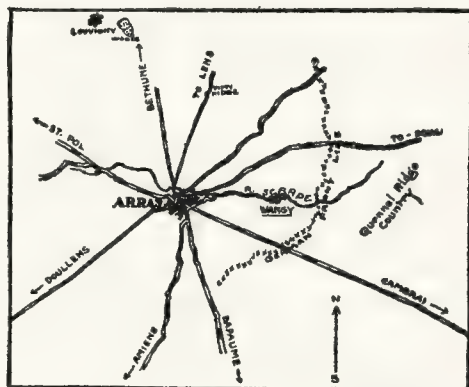
"That's the *thump* we heard," declared Rusty, spotting the iron. "Whoever was workin' up here likely left it too close to the edge of this bench and it fell off."

"Uh-huh," said Fat, and he picked up the apparent cause of their alarm.

It was still warm. Upon its smooth surface were traces of some silvery stuff.

"Looks like wax," said Fat. "Let's look about."

Up and down the room they went. Scattered about the floor were blocks of wood—soft like pine. Close to the base-board at one spot they found a lot of shavings. In a dirty bowl were traces of a sort of glue as Rusty, sampling with his fingers, discovered. Another pot held a fine, silvery powder.



Fat crossed over to the window. He looked out on a torn and tumbled back-lot sloping down to the muddy waters of the Scarpe. Fat whistled. He had not known the river flowed so close to Wangy. Standing there, the great idea got him. His face flushed with excitement.

"See!" he called to Rusty, at the same time indicating the river. "That's where the town major got his fish. And I'll have a mess of 'em, *toot-sweet*, if I don't miss my guess. Let's go."

Rusty slung his rifle and followed his pal

downstairs. They had just reached the street when they saw the object of their quest approaching in a great hurry.

"Ain't he the swank?" laughed Rusty. "Look at his tunic—all stiff and starched. Even got his breeks pressed and creased. Reg'lar fashion plate."

"Yah," said Fat, "but you've got to give him credit. He's the only town major I know of that's got the nerve to stick this far forward in the fightin' zone."

Both runners saluted smartly as the town major of Wangy, spurs clinking, came up.

"Well," he queried, "what's up?"

Fat delivered his message, the officer making little notations.

"An' beggin' your pardon, sir," said Fat, "we busted into your place when somethin' thumped up-stairs. We imagined somethin' was wrong."

"An' all we found," enjoined Rusty, "was—was——"

"Where I do my fussing, I'll wager," the town major put in. "I'm a bear for cleanliness. Next to Godliness, you know. I can't stand a sloppy turn-out. That's why I spend so much time on my own uniforms. If I only had a good batman—army won't supply one, worse luck—I'd have him do the washing and ironing. But, as it is,—pardon me, you runners are in a hurry, I'm sure. Tell your adjutant I'll look after those reinforcements. Drop in some day and have a drink. Cheerio, chaps."

And he went his jingling way, flicking gaily with his crop at the dahlia buds.



AN HOUR to noon found Fat and Rusty by the banks of the river in a location not far removed from the town major's domicile. Fat had selected it as a suitable spot in view of the fact that the Scarpe was fairly deep there and it gave his bombs a chance to work with the minimum of shrapnel back-throw. Rusty was busily engaged in fastening several ground sheets together. Job done, he stuck his improvised landing-net on the top of a baby poplar up-rooted from a near-by garden.

"Let 'er go, Fat," he cried.

Fat pulled the pin from a Mills and heaved the lemon-shaped demon of destruction into the middle of the stream. Five other bombs followed in quick succession. Came as many muffled *whangs* followed by waterspouts.

"Get busy, Rusty," urged Fat. "Skin

out on those timbers and grab anything that's got scales on it."

Presently the surface of the stream was checker-boarded with fish bellies. Rusty swung his net wildly.

"What luck?" asked Fat, one eye trained on the street back of them up which interference might come any moment.

"Lot o' darned sardines," replied Rusty, dumping the finny things into a sand-bag.

"Better than nothin'," declared Fat. "Make it snappy, boy."

Up the street, long and shrill, a whistle blew.

"Fritzie over," called Fat and he glanced skyward. Out of the sun came death. A single-seater, traveling at terrible speed, was making the blue throb with the bark of its motor. Its tail was one of many colors, suggesting some circus group. When—it seemed—directly over Fat and Rusty, the Fokker banked steeply and went flopping over and over like a wounded pigeon. Then, righting itself quickly, it pulled its nose upward and climbed beyond a mass of fleecy clouds.

"Insultin' pig," snorted Rusty, searching the sky for some British plane that might give chase.

"That cuckoo's due for a hidin'," declared Fat. "Twice this week he's pulled the same stunt and he won't get away with it very long. They'll lay for him some of these fine days and bash in his front windows."



FAT'S win of the six hundred francs was regimental history by a matter of three hours only when the storm blew in battalion headquarters. It came in the form of a blustery town major who flung himself into the C. O.'s cellar with all the recklessness of a child braving main street traffic at the lunch hour.

"Hot tomale," said the sentry at the top of the stairs as he listened to the argument in the depths. "This is worse than Hill 70."

The town major had the last say and launched himself away. Immediately thereafter the orderly room clerk came under harrassing fire. For a full half-hour the C. O. dictated at top speed. And the faster he dictated the madder he got.

"I won't have any old non-combatant coming in here and giving me ——," he

thundered, but his thunder was that of the distant roll after the lightning has passed.

For the town major's word was law insofar as area supervision and discipline was concerned, and the C. O. knew it. However, it did not prevent him from venting his indignation on some one, so he hammered it into the orderly room clerk who in turn hammered it into his helpless typewriter.

Fat Fleming and Rusty Radford and the H. Q. runners read the result of the hammering, later.

Bombing of French streams must cease. The Town Major of Wangy has been instructed by the French civil authorities to demand the immediate arrest of any offender in this regard. All other ranks of the unit are urged to give this warning the closest observance. The penalty for such an offence in future will be severe.

"That ends your fishin' trips, Fat," some one said.

"How d'you get that way?" flared Fat.

"Well—there's the C. O.'s order."

"I'm like Nelson, though——"

"'Bat' Nelson?"

"Naw, the sailor guy that stuck his op'ra glass to his dud lamp that time and says: 'I can't see the Beat It sign. On with the dance,—or somethin' like that. Only last week the C. O. says to me, 'Fleming, you can't see any farther than your nose.'"

"Well?" chorused his audience.

"Well," said Fat, throwing out his chest. "I'm just takin' the C. O. at his word. An' joinin' Nelson's school. I can't see that doggone order."



THAT very same week Ingelligence got its wind up higher than a kite. Two companies of the 17th—a crack fighting unit—were blown to bits in their beds in Louvigny woods. Louvigny woods with its huts lay twelve and a half miles, as the shell flies, from the truck-mounted navals that did the dirty job. The particular huts hadn't been occupied for seven months. Nor had the woods been shelled in all that time. There was room for speculation, Intelligence contended, as to just how much Fritz really knew before the howling metal from the monster guns was loosed upon their unsuspecting targets.

With a reshuffle of numerous past happenings—accepted then as quite matter-of-fact but now viewed differently in the light of the Louvigny mess—the spy-scare gained

momentum and was soon running with every block open.

"Too much talking about coming events," was the way Intelligence sized up the situation. Up front, battalion commanders scoffed at Eye's worried attitude and said:

"Come on up here. We'll give you something to fret about."

But Intelligence went its worried way and plotted the downfall of a cocky Hun pilot who had the habit of stunting over certain Pas de Calais towns, disdainfully dragging his rainbow fuselage through blasts of small-arm and archie fire from the earth below.

This cocky, circus chap went down like a stone before Mont St. Eloy after a ten-mile running scrap in which the five Camels, on his tail from start to finish, toyed with him as a cat might toy with a mouse. With five minutes to live his lips dribbled a few words of disclosure. Intelligence accepted the dribble at face value and wired for an immediate get-together of all Blue-Patch unit commanders.

In time Fat Fleming and Rusty Radford and the H. Q. runners—the entire battalion in fact—got it, straight from the shoulder, from their fiery C. O. In abbreviated terms the old man's counsel was this:

"Keep your eyes open—think but little—and talk a —— sight less. Let's end this spy-scare."

So the battalion moved into the line with the old man's demand for tight lips still ringing in their ears.

Fat Fleming, slugging rations, brought up the subject.

"Rusty," he said, "mebbe you and me have been gabbin' too much. Mum's the word from now on. Say—I'll bet that Heinie flier whose wings they clipped down by St. Eloy was the same bird we saw stuntin' that first fish day. I figured at the time he wasn't pullin' all those tricks for his health. An' to think he was signalin'."

"Signalin'? What? Who to?" Rusty hadn't read the communiqué with the tale of the circus chap's downing.

"That's the catch" said Fat, grunting over a bag of bully beef. "To some one, that's sure. But the guy croaked before they could get any more out of him. The darned country must be full of spies to hear them pussyfoots back there rave."

On the bridge, around midnight, Fat alluded to their ration-hour conversation.

"I've been thinkin' " said Fat.

"Well—don't waste too much time about it," chided Rusty, pointing to a huge black and white sign nearby.

THIS BRIDGE UNDER OBSERVATION DON'T DALLY

The bridge in question connected Beer and Don, the two front-line companies. It was a flimsy thing, knocked out every day or so by a well-placed 5.9 and as regularly rebuilt. Below it, moving swiftly toward the German line, gurgled the dirty Scarpe.

"I've been thinkin'," reiterated Fat, "that you and me, Rusty, ought to try for that month's leave they're offerin' for spy-catchin'. We could do with a rest, we could."

"— of a chance we've got" said Rusty.

"Good as any," Fat contradicted. "Hello—what's that?"

Sliding down toward them on the surface of the stream was a slender silvery shape.

"Fish," snorted Fat, "and a whopper. Go get him, eh?"

Fat was down on his knees now, having jerked off one of his rubber waders. He leaned far over the swaying footbridge. "Grab my legs, Rusty, and hang on for dear life. I'm goin' to try for this bird."

Rusty hung on panting, while Fat stretched out his arms. The capture couldn't have been affected more neatly. The silvery shape slid into the boot—and Fat was up with a little squeal of triumph.

"Late supper tonight, boy—if this baby's fresh," he cried, and drew forth his catch.

Five minutes later the boys were talking with their heads together.

Up ahead, beyond the rise and fall of the pale German flares, a big gun coughed dully.

Wow-w-w! And the rubber-gun shell crashed into the river bank fifty yards away.

Wow-w-w! This would be a darned sight closer. Fat flopped at full length on the bridge and Rusty came down upon him like a million of bricks.

There was a red flare before their eyes—a splintering crash. Stinging fumes blinded them—choked them. A lurch—and the rickety bridge started for the bottom.

"Hang on," called Fat, but there was no reply from Rusty, who, face down, lay very still, the water now slapping about his

ankles. "Rusty, boy," entreated Fat, and dragged the limp form of his pal to him.

The instant the waters closed over them Fat found it hard going, but he finally made the opposite bank, very tired and sore. He put Rusty down upon a clump of rushes and yelled for stretcher-bearers. Help was soon at hand and Rusty, badly shaken up, but unwounded, was shoved into a funk hole and covered up with good, warm blankets.

The moon had long gone down when Fat quitted the river bank. He would have no late supper, that was certain. For the big fish had slid out of his hands during the mad scramble on the bridge. But Fat, as he sidled up the narrow trench to headquarters, seemed not at all disturbed over the loss of his late meal. His heart was thumping with the thrill of impending big things. For Fat Fleming saw that coveted one month's leave in the offing and he was going after it. And if he got the prize Rusty would trail along too. He would stipulate that. Good old Rusty!

"— of a chance," Rusty had said, though, never dreaming.

"— of a good chance," decided Fat as he pounded along, his pulse quickening as each stride brought him nearer to the C. O.'s dug-out.

Fat found the old man in. And in an amiable mood.

"Well, Fleming," shot the C. O. "Something up your sleeve?"

"Yes, sir." And Fat told his story with a ring of conviction that absorbed the old man's interest from the jump.

"If there's anything to this theory of yours," declared the C. O., "we'll have to work quickly. Because, son—" and he lowered his voice—"there's quite a 'do' coming off in a couple of days now. And if Fritz should get wind of it he'd make us pay one — of a price for the trouble we've taken to outwit him. I want you to keep this under your hat, son—under your hat. We're going after Quennel Ridge."

"Gosh," breathed Fat. He grasped the significance of that statement. Quennel was a hard nut to crack. But once cracked—well, great possibilities lay beyond.

"Surprise show?"

"Surprise is no name for it," grinned the C. O. "Tanks 'n' everything." Noting the bewildered expression on Fleming's face, he added: "Every night now, Wangy—back

there—is being filled to the brim with troops. Every night tanks are moving up and camouflaging in the streets ready to kick off at zero. And we're jamming the place so full of artillery that Fritz'll wonder what's struck him when the guns cut loose. Fritz's had it quiet here for so long that we're sure to catch him napping."

Some burning thought flashed through Fat Fleming's mind. It was Rusty—wasn't it?—who had talked like that. Sure! Only Rusty had had it the other way. Fat wondered who was right—the old man or Rusty. And while he stood there, lost in thought, the C. O. rapped out:

"Skin along, Fleming. I've got a lot of work to do. Have every runner report to me in ten minutes. They're going to do some real running."

And he sat down and resumed his study of the divisional operation order for the Quennel Ridge shove.

Dawn was just breaking when they got the huge roll of chicken wire in place. Lashed securely to each bank, bobbing up and down with the current, it had been designed to intercept anything the Scarpe might bring down to it.

"Not half bad," commented the C. O., who had lent his personal supervision to the task.

"It ought to tell us whether or not there's anything to this pipe dream of young Fleming's," said the adjutant, who had been let in on the thing but was still skeptical.

Fat Fleming and Rusty Radford were in the background praying earnestly for a catch.

And their hopes were realized.

Fifteen hours later the fish was landed. The C. O., himself, emptied the chicken-wire net. He took the catch—queer fish it was—and hammered it against the iron post of a "concertina." It broke in two in his strong hands.

"My—!" gasped the old man. He had brought the gleam of a tiny torch to bear upon his capture. A long, official document he held—word for word, from beginning to end, an exact copy of the secret divisional operation order for the Quennel Ridge shove.

"Thank heavens, we've stopped this one," said the old man, breathing hard. "There's a bad leak in our system—oh, lord, where is it?—or this—German agent couldn't lay hands on such information as this."

"And look," he went on, fumbling with the document, "look what he's added."

Scrawled across the bottom in German was:

Gas Wangy heavily from midnight on. At an hour to zero concentrate every available battery on the town. They will be caught like rats in a trap if this course is pursued.

It was a bewildered group that swung about at Fat Fleming's explanation of surprise. Fat held the fragments of the catch in his hands.

"Same as Rusty and I nabbed the other night," he cried "and I've seen their like before."

"Where, boy, where?" demanded the adjutant.

And Fat told them, stumbling over his words in his eagerness to tell them. It took but a second for Rusty Radford to corroborate his pal's claim.

"Who'd have dreamt it? The dirty skunk!" thundered the C. O., cracking his fists together in a nasty manner. "We've got to get him at once."



AND they got him.

Got him in the top-story room of his rose-covered home at evening time. Got him as he was about to clear out—as he was boxing up the flat iron and the glue and the silvery stuff and the wood from which he whittled his models. So intent had he been on his task that he failed to hear Fat and Rusty's cautious approach until the former's rifle-barrel poked him in the back.

"The jig's up, major," said Fat. "Get those hands higher."

"All right, boys," was the unruffled reply. "You might get this business over as quickly as possible."

They jerked him down-stairs and out into the yard where the grass was green and fresh; where the dahlia-clumps were now blooming. And they tied him to a poplar tree so he couldn't move. And while Fat squatted on guard, his Enfield sure and steady, Rusty tore down street to Brigade H. Q. for a detail of men that had been arranged by the C. O. and Intelligence for just such a situation.

Three hours to dawn—and the streets were echoing and re-echoing to the scrub of marching feet in endless columns, the grunt of lumbering tanks breathing smoke

and petrol, the pound of gun-carriages on the cobbled highway and the creak of tackle as long-barrelled field-pieces, squatting in the ruins, stretched their throats and waited impatiently for the red-over-green-over-red barrage rocket.

"Hear 'em, major?" asked Fat of his prisoner. "Hear 'em movin' up? Let me tell you, major, that this crowd you figured so nicely in your little trap is goin' to hit hard tomorrow mornin'. They're goin' to dent the old ridge somethin' awful."

The town major of Wangy gave no answer. Once or twice he lifted his head and strained his eyes into the darkness. Up ahead, pale German flares, in their nodding way, swished up against the vault of black sky from a dreaming, unsuspecting line.

Out on the street a dominating voice whipped out—

"Through that gate—there."

Into the peaceful yard thumped a dozen riflemen. An officer stepped forward.

"I'm from Intelligence," he explained sharply. "Who's in charge, here?"

"Here, sir!" Fat Fleming stepped forward.


"All right, boy. Your O. C. just phoned for you to report back to him *toot-sweet*. We'll attend to this fellow in short order."

Fat and Rusty were soon far down the road.

"Well, that's that," said Rusty, pushing along.

From behind them sounded a faint crackle of rifles.

"An' that's that," said Fat. And after awhile, "Queer fish, wasn't he?"

 SKIMMING along in the London-bound express, Fat and Rusty were reviewing the whole business for the twentieth time—or more.

"Funny," said Fat, "what lengths those secret service guys will go to. Imagine that Wangy town major gettin' his dope through to Fritzie in hollow wooden fish, all dolled up to look like the real thing. Seems like a dream, now. Why—the way Intelligence worked it out—it only took six hours for to float 'em down the Scarpe into the Hun lines. Some stunt, eh?"

"Sure was," affirmed Rusty. "And then havin' a plane to signal him the message had been received."

Fat Fleming leaned back in the compartment watching the ever-changing landscape.

"No wonder," he said, "the major went up in the air that day we bombed the fish. 'Fraid he might be found out, I s'pose."

"Uh-huh," smiled Rusty, flicking car dust from his new outfit. "And usin' his ice-box for a hidin'-place. You can't beat it."

"Must 'a' been a big bug in their service," said Fat.

"Must 'a' been. You can see now why Fritz let that doggone town alone."

After a lull—

"We was lucky to get our leave."

"We sure was."

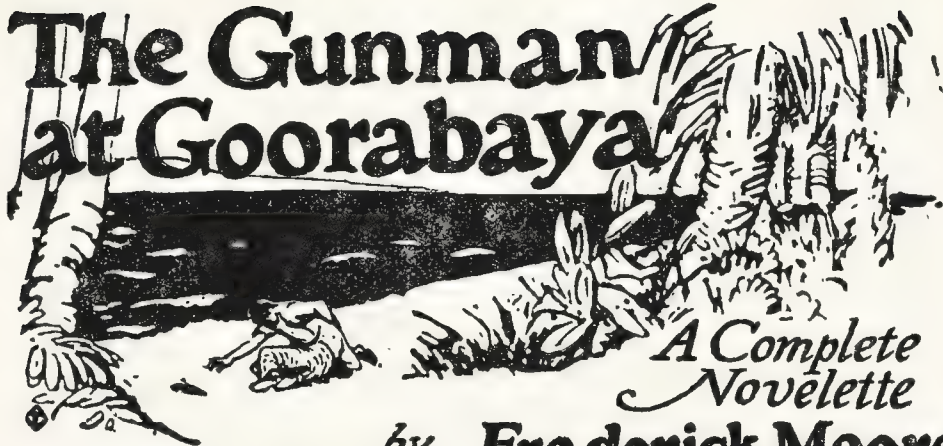
"Of course, we won't say anythin' over here in Blighty 'bout how we got our medals."

"Of course not."

And of course they never did. Queer fish if they didn't.



The Gunman at Goorabaya



A Complete
Novelette
by **Frederick Moore**

Author of "God of the Sakai," "Three Passengers for Lantu-Vanna," etc.

HEATON, propped up in bed in the Grand Hotel of the Far East at Goorabaya, watched the little wharf all afternoon. The island steamer *Labuan* was in and loading plantation and jungle products, but Heaton was not at all interested in what went into the holds of the *Labuan*. He was watching to see who might come out of her.

His room was on the second floor; that is, the top floor, under the bamboo rafters and the palm-thatch roof, and Heaton had a plain view of the wharf and the steamer. The open *kajang*, which served as a window, let out on a narrow little porch that was really a kind of second deck to the veranda below. And as the steamer was not more than three hundred yards from the front of the hotel, Heaton felt sure no one could get away from the steamer without being seen.

Below, in the bar of the hotel, the skipper and mate of the *Labuan* were having a late tiffin with much hilarity and the occasional popping of a cork. The Grand Hotel of the Far East was built of split bamboo and *attap*—entirely native construction.

It was more like a gigantic basket than a house, for it creaked, and the walls bent when anybody moved along the upper hall. A word spoken in ordinary tones in one end of the building could be heard through half a dozen

partitions, so what went on in the bar could be heard in the rooms of the upper floor with surprising clearness.

From the instant the *Labuan* was alongside the dock, Heaton had kept his eyes on her with the fixity and steadiness of a cat watching a mouse-run. At intervals he reached to the little table beside his bed, regimented with medicine-bottles in careful rows, took a cigaret and applied a match without for an instant breaking his gaze on the steamer.

He was a man close to forty, with that sallow skin which indicates many a bout with tropical fever; but for a sick man Heaton had an amazing look of vitality. His eyes were gray, and there was nothing in them now of fever-light.

There was determination and pugnacity in the squarely cut jaws, tenacity in the straight line of his lips and egotistical force in his high-bridged nose. His long, blondish but sun-faded hair lay down on his forehead, damp and ruffled, reaching almost as low as the line of his eyebrows. This was the only thing about him that gave him the aspect of a man who might be sick.

"I must get a letter away by the *Labuan*," he told himself.

Reaching for a pad of paper and a pencil on the table, he propped the paper on his knees under the sheet, and began to write. He put down no more than two or three words at a time, pausing between the intermittent writing to glance out at the steamer. This is the letter he wrote:

"The Gunman at Goorabaya," copyright, 1924, by Frederick Moore.

Dear Marvin: Here I am at Goorabaya, broke. Being the only guest in this hotel, Tromp, the owner, will expect me to pay up when I want to go. I'm playing at sick, and the above is one of the reasons, but I've got a better. Dannrether cleaned me out. I had to skip from my plantation and get down to this confounded island in a schooner. Dannrether's gang walked in—and it was fight the lot of 'em, or be killed. I've got the goods on Dannrether, and he knows it. I'll have him behind the bars in a month if I can get to Manila. But he won't let me get out of here alive if he can help it. The *Labuan* is just in—and I'm watching her like a hawk. There's every chance that Dannrether has sent one of his gunmen to finish me here, so I'm taking a wide chance that this will get to you, if you're back from Hong Kong. I don't trust Tromp—nor Spencer, the skipper of the *Labuan*. He's told Tromp no passengers came down with him—maybe, but my eyes are peeled.

You know how Dannrether has a lot of people playing his game under cover, not bribed with cash, but bribed with handing them business. They find it worth their while to play his game. Tromp may be straight, but there's not another white man in this port, outside of the plantation up on the north end. So if Dannrether sends a gunman, I could be wiped out in what would look like a row, as Tromp does not know who I am. Of course, I figure I can look after myself if a gunman does come—if I see him. But he'll probably sneak ashore, and plug me before I know there's a stranger in the place.

So I'm laying low with the sick game. You may not get this, but if you do, send me some cash. If Dannrether gets away with his game, I'm ruined—island and all gone. If I get out of this jam, Dannrether'll swing, that's sure

GEORGE.

He folded the sheet and put it under his pillow. He turned his eyes once more on the steamer and the groups of workmen about her. Then, half an hour later, just as the sky had changed from the streaming crimsons of sunset to the swift darkness of the tropics, Heaton gave a gasp of surprise and his hand went quickly to the little table, fumbled under a towel and withdrew an automatic pistol.

"I'm right!" he exclaimed under his breath. "I knew it would happen—and about this time!"



OUT of the gloom of the *Labuan's* main-deck, which was littered with bales around the open hatch, the dim figure of a man in white had suddenly appeared, and, pausing for an instant to make sure that none of the native workmen

was about, had crossed the deck and vaulted the steamer's rail to the wharf.

The crew of the steamer, and the workers on the wharf were straggling away to supper. But the man who jumped from the steamer missed discovery by a narrow margin, for he had not observed a native approaching behind a pile of bales which masked him from view. This native touched a match to a *dammar* torch at the instant that the man in white came out at the end of the pile of bales to get in among them.

The fugitive was illumined for a minute in the flare of the newly lighted torch. The glare of the flame was in the native's eyes, and he did not observe the stranger. But Heaton had a good sight of him before he turned abruptly and walked away from the native—to hide in among the bales.

"That's Dannrether's man, and Captain Spencer either lied to Tromp when he told Tromp there were no passengers or Tromp lied to me!" breathed Heaton. "And why should either of 'em lie just about an ordinary passenger? And why should he sneak out of the *Labuan* if he's not afraid of being seen? That goes to show how little trust I can put in what Tromp says, or Captain Spencer.

"If I'd taken Tromp's word for it that there were no passengers in the *Labuan*, I'd be in a nice pickle, with this bird in white sneaking into the hotel and hiding away, probably in the next room! And listening to every confounded word I'd say in the next week, and me not a bit the wiser! Then plugging me when there was a boat ready to sail!"

Heaton gave a snort of disgust, and then his lips twisted into a grin of satisfaction that showed his teeth. His fingers tightened lovingly over the automatic, and he slipped it under the sheet. He dug the letter from under the pillow and with infinite care, tore it into tiny bits and dropped them into a glass of water.

"Can't take any chances of Tromp or Captain Spencer reading that," he told himself. "I'll put my trust in hot lead!"

The three white men in the bar below were laughing and talking, Tromp's voice coming up through the lattice floor of split-bamboo in lazy, soft-spoken phrases. And with the voices the aroma of Tromp's pipe, filled with the pungent Sumatra tobacco.

Heaton slumped down on his pillow, pulled the sheet up to his chin, and reached

out for the cord which went through the floor to the bar. He gave the cord a violent wrench, and from below there came the sharp jangle of a bell.

A native servant appeared in the open doorway.

"Shut the *kajang*, light the lamp, send Tuan Tromp here!"

The words were snapped out in perfect Malay—Heaton knew how to give orders in a way to have them obeyed.

The servant sprang forward and let down the *kajang* on its rattan hinges. Now there was no semblance of a window at all, for the *attap* shutter was of the same material as the side of the house, and the *kajang* acted like the cover of a box on its side.

Out of the darkness there came a grating sound, and a match flared in the room, illumining the yellowish-brown face of the Malay. He took the cylindrical chimney from the lamp on the table, ignited the wick, put the chimney back into place, bowed and left the room. Heaton coughed gently as the smell of rank, burning oil assailed his nostrils and throat.

The light of the lamp, which had no shade, burned with a steady yellowish glare that made Heaton screw up his eyes. He waited with impatience for Tromp to come and fussed with the bottles of medicine. In the strong light, his hand was shown as muscular, yet bony, and mottled with freckles. There was a sureness of touch and a steadiness in his movements that would have amazed Tromp if he could have seen them.

In a minute there was an overture of creaks and shakes of the flooring and walls, and Tromp stood in the open door. He was a big man, wearing trousers of a size that would have held two men of his bulk. For a coat, he wore a white jacket with brass buttons, cut in the style of a steamer steward's mess-coat. His shock of yellow hair gleamed in the lamplight, and his bulbous nose stuck out of his big round face like something foreign to his features, more like a strange growth than a nose. He was smoking a long pipe which reached down to his waist, and ended in a bulbous china bowl with a pewter cover. He stood in the doorway, puffing lazily, his blue eyes blinking.

"What you wants from me?" asked Tromp grumblingly, as if he objected to

being called from his tap-room while he had guests who were spending their money freely.

Heaton beckoned him nearer, and as the big fellow approached the table, made a gesture for caution.

"Did you ask Captain Spencer if he brought any passengers for Goorabaya in the *Labuan*?" he asked in a whisper.

"Sure I asked him!" said Tromp, his eyes opening in surprize. "I ask him what you say to me to ask—and I tell it to you—nobody to Goorabaya is come."

"And he told you nobody had come? That's what I'm after—that Spencer said it."

"If so, would not the passenger be now in this hotel of mine?" countered Tromp.

"Did Captain Spencer say he had no white man aboard?" pressed Heaton.

"Sure he say it! This is another time you bother me with such questions, and——"

"Yes, yes, I forget," Heaton hastened to say. "It's my fever, you know. But I feel better now, and maybe I'll be well enough to get up tomorrow."

"That is good," said Tromp, but he was indifferent, in spite of his congratulation, for he turned slowly, like a frigate getting under way, and paddled for the door.

"Tell Captain Spencer I want to see him," said Heaton. "And right away, on important business."

"If you like," replied Tromp blandly, and passed through the door.

Heaton turned his head and kept sight of the hotel proprietor until he had closed the lattice behind him, and then Heaton listened carefully as the big man creaked down the stairs.

Once more there was a sudden hush in the quiet hilarity below, and presently Heaton heard Captain Spencer's voice in amazement:

"You say he wants to see me? What for?"

Heaton could not make out the reply of Tromp, but the mate's voice came up in muffled laughter, as if Tromp had made a joke of the matter. And in a few minutes there was a new creaking of the stairs, and a scratching at the door.

"Come in, skipper!" called Heaton in friendly tones.

The master of the *Labuan* entered. He was a short, stocky man, red of face and with keen, bird-like eyes. He was still chewing food, he had a napkin tucked in the upper part of his waistcoat and he was

in his shirt-sleeves with the cuffs turned back to his elbows. When he sat down to eat, Captain Spencer apparently cleared for action and made a thorough job of the business in hand.

"You want to see me?" challenged the skipper as he came to a stop midway between door and bed, and peered at the man before him.

"You're sailing for Manila in the morning, aren't you?" asked Heaton.

"Heaven willing, I am," said Spencer.

"Then I'll go with you as passenger."

Captain Spencer stopped chewing and darted his head forward with a quick, inquiring jerk.

"What's the matter of you?" he demanded, taking in the bottles on the bedside table with his peering eyes.

"I've been down with fever three weeks. But the crisis came this morning, and I'll be all right now. Look! Feel my hand—my pulse! I'm steady as a clock and fit as a fiddle—no sweat, no heat, no chills!"

Heaton thrust out a hand.

Captain Spencer did not move forward. Instead, he resumed his chewing. He studied Heaton's face for a minute, and then, as he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, inquired—

"How do you know you ain't got the plague?"

Heaton laughed heartily.

"I feel as well as you do, captain. I've just stuck to bed today to rest up—been out and on my feet several times, and I'm as strong as a horse—only a little weak on my pins, of course. Plague! Nonsense!"

"I dunno about that," said Spencer. "Living in this grass hotel, a man might pick up anything in the way of a complaint. I'm no sawbones and I can't take a chance with a ailing passenger. You might have a relapse on the way up to Manila, and then I wouldn't get pratique."

"What's the fare?" asked Heaton.

Spencer shook his head with finality.

"Makes no difference what the fare is. I can't chance it."

"But I thought you had a ship's doctor aboard the *Labuan*," persisted Heaton. "Let him look me over, and I'll go by what he says."

"I've no ship's doctor," said Spencer. "How'd you get that idea in your head?"

"Not exactly a ship's doctor, no," admitted Heaton. "But I was under the

impression, somehow, that you had a doctor as passenger, picked him up on some of the islands where you stopped on the way down."

"In the first place, I didn't stop at any island ports on my way down," said Spencer.

"No!" Heaton appeared to be amazed. "Then who is the white man you've got aboard?"

"Nary a white man aboard me," said Spencer. "You're a bit balmy, I take it, from fever yet. Me and the mate we're the only white men in the *Labuan*, and I told as much to Tromp when he asked me if I had any passengers. I say, you'd better keep quiet, my friend, and rest a bit more before you go starting for Manila. You're a little inclined to be off your head."

"Then you came straight from Manila?" insisted Heaton.

"Straight as a course could be steered," said Spencer. "Good night to you."

"Good night," said Heaton wearily. "Sorry you won't take me along. I've plenty of money, and I'll pay double fare. Yes and fifty dollars gold over and above double fare!"

Captain Spencer stopped and turned about.

"You're on!" he snapped crisply. "Now that you make it worth while, I can chance being hung in quarantine. Show me the color of your money."

"You can have it in Manila, and —"

Spencer gave a snort.

"I'm not running a passenger-line on credit. Cash down, if you want to do business with me."

"But I've plenty in Manila—will pay before I go ashore, so —"

"You'll pay it before we leave Goora-baya," said Spencer.

He walked through the door and shut it behind him with shattering decision.

Heaton clawed at his damp hair. "Oh, for some cash!" he muttered. "Hung here without a dollar, and in debt to Tromp, who'll never let me away, even if I get free passage. And all the money I've sunk in my dinky plantation—Dannrether in control!"

He shook his head, thrust out his jaw and went on.

"It's something to know that Spencer came straight from Manila! And Spencer was probably well paid to bring this chap who jumped the steamer, and let him sneak

ashore. Also, Spencer probably agreed to see that I didn't get away from this blasted hole—and just took me up to see how much cash I had. I'd better get ready for Dannrether's gunman, and we'll see who draws the prize of a lead pill!"



HE GLANCED at the door and crept out of bed. He crossed the floor carefully, but with a vigor beyond what might be expected of a man who has been in bed three weeks. He wore silk pajamas of blue, and as he walked to the door, carried the automatic pistol in his outstretched hand. After securing the door with a couple of loops of rattan that dropped over an iron spike, he took his clothes from a chair and dressed himself in his white suit, all but his white shoes. These he made sure were unlaced low, so that in case of emergency they could be put on with the least possible delay.

Heaton, thus clad, appeared to be a man of means. His clothes had that certain cut and quality produced by the best tailors of Shanghai or Singapore. The shoes were of the best buckskin, well pipe-clayed and comparatively new. The socks on his feet were of white silk, and were also new and clean. His shirt was tussur of the finest quality, and when he had combed his hair at the little stand at the foot of the bed, he looked far more respectable than he had as he lay under the sheet with his eyes almost masked by the ruffled hair.

His brow was well-shaped, and marked by a band of white skin across the top, where the inner rim of the big sun-helmet hanging on the wall protected him from the tropical sun when he was in the open. This helmet he clapped on his head.

He wore a belt of heavy brown leather and over his hips there were leather groove-like pockets sewed, which held a pair of extra magazines for his automatic. The sides of his coat, when hanging naturally, hid these magazines, as they did the flapless holster where he now pouched the pistol.

Heaton surveyed the bottles of medicine on the table with a satisfied grin.

"You've served your purpose, right enough," he whispered to them. "But from now on I'm a well man. I can't take a chance of being caught in bed with Dannrether's gunman out among the bales on the wharf."

Placing his shoes under the coaming, or

high sill of the *kajang*, where they might be reached from the little upper veranda outside the "window," Heaton blew out the light. Then he opened the *kajang* gently, slipped through to the upper veranda and let the *kajang* fall shut behind him.

From the veranda, hidden in the gloom of the overhanging eaves and well out of the zone of illumination from the decks of the *Labuan* and the wharf, Heaton could see the natives at work, moving about with lanterns and torches.

The sky was overcast, without moon or stars. The space between hotel and wharf was a perfect pit of blackness, illumined now and then slightly when a man with a torch moved toward the land side. Here and there a light marked a porthole in the steamer's side, and there was a volcanic-like reflection through a skylight where illumination shot straight upward and showed the rigging of the mainmast.

Heaton stood on the veranda several minutes, peering into the ruck of bales, hoping by chance that a moving lantern or a torch would reveal the man who was hidden in the litter of outgoing cargo. But he saw nothing which told him that the lurker from the *Labuan* was still there.

Heaton reached in under the *kajang* and brought out his shoes. Putting them on, he moved cautiously to the end of the veranda, where a bamboo ladder, leading to the ground under a big tree that spread its branches over the roof at that side, provided a means of getting down secretly. This was the end of the building away from the tap-room, and there was no light coming out on the ground level. So he went down the ladder, a round at a time, with infinite care.

On the ground he swung off toward the sandy beach of the little bay which formed the island's harbor. He found it easy to move, for in the darkness among the palm trees he had cover from surprise by anybody who might start for the native village with a lantern or a torch. He kept on until he got to the hard sand of the beach, then circled back for the wharf, and approached it without any attempt to conceal himself from the native workmen.

Heaton dawdled about the wharf, keeping well in the shadows and out of range of lanterns and torches. He managed to conduct himself so that he appeared to be waiting for somebody. And he kept turning

about, so that he could not be surprized from any particular direction. As he loafed he kept one hand in his side coat-pocket on his pistol ready for action.

There was more illumination about the steamer's hatches now, for many of the natives had come back to work after supper and were working again. Bales were steadily going into the hold by whip-tackles. But it was not the steamer that Heaton watched; instead, he kept a careful lookout along the land side of the wharf where a man might escape unseen into that dark strip between wharf and hotel.

He could not be sure that the man he had seen was still there. The lurker might already have escaped into the brush or down the beach in either direction. It seemed unlikely that the stranger would go openly to the hotel. That would be boldness not to be expected from a man who would sneak out of the steamer.

"He'll probably wait until the *Labuan* has sailed before he shows up at all," decided Heaton. "And in the meantime he'll make quiet inquiries for me."



GOORABAYA was a large island, as such islands go, but the population was almost entirely native. The plantations some ten miles away had a white superintendent, and the plantation-house or Tromp's hotel were the only sensible places for a white man to seek living quarters, unless he went among the natives of the village far down the beach, or to the few straggling huts in the hills.

"And no white man," reasoned Heaton, "could live with the natives without the news getting to Tromp or the plantation-superintendent. A native can't keep a secret, no matter how well you pay him. Gossip just trickles around from native to native like molasses leaking from a busted cask until the whole island is in the know."

There was another theory that Heaton had to consider. He regarded it as the most likely one. It was that Captain Spencer was allowing Dannrether's man to sneak into Goorabaya secretly and that Tromp was already bribed by Spencer to give shelter to the stranger and keep his presence secret from the other guest of the hotel.

"That's the spot of my greatest danger," Heaton admitted to himself as he went over that phase of the problem. "It may be that this man of Dannrether's is already

hiding in the hotel, or waiting for the *Labuan* to sail before he makes himself known to Tromp."

For half an hour Heaton wandered about the wharf. Then he heard the voices of Captain Spencer and the mate and Tromp through the open *kajang* of the tap-room. The two men of the steamer were on their feet now, walking about with their caps on, as Heaton could see over the top of a screen that hid most of the interior of the room.

"I'd better get out of this, or Spencer'll run into me here, and give me away to Dannrether's man, if he's still about," decided Heaton. "I could be trapped and shot that way. Spencer could start a row by accusing me of attempting to stow away in his packet, and I'm supposed to be sick in bed. Any kind of an argument would give Dannrether's man a chance to blow my back out and then the lot of 'em swear I'd started the fuss."

He moved off the wharf to the soft, dry sand and skirted some bales in order to get to the path leading back to the hotel. Not that he intended returning to the hotel, but he wanted to make it appear so to any curious native observer, and he wanted a report, if anything was said about him at all, that he had gone back to Tromp's.

The instant that he was invisible from the wharf, he was startled at seeing a figure in white dart from behind a cluster of bales at the far end and run swiftly for the sandy beach.

"There's Dannrether's chap!" gasped the amazed Heaton. "He was there after all and I'd given up all possibility of finding him again tonight! Now's my chance to get him before Tromp has laid eyes on him, or had a word with him!"

Heaton began to run slowly through the darkness, taking the same direction as the fugitive, but on a course that was parallel. Heaton was in no particular hurry to overtake his man.

"I mustn't get him too close to the hotel, or the fat's in the fire. If he takes me far enough, I can deal with him without interference from anybody, and nobody the wiser. If I can settle his hash, or capture him, I can handle things as they fall in my own way!"

He snicked down the safety-catch on his automatic, but drew it from his pocket.

The fleeing man was invisible. But Heaton could hear, above the gentle murmur of the surf, the soft *scuff-scuff* of shoes

being pounded rapidly into soft, dry sand. Heaton was close behind by this time, but off to the right, running through a dark palm-grove. The angle of his course was such that in time he could come up with the fugitive by covering a shorter distance to the incurving beach.

Presently the leading runner slacked his pace. He was probably pausing for breath and listening to make sure he had made a clear escape. Heaton stood not twenty feet away on the edge of the palm-grove, and could hear Dannrether's man panting after his sprint. It was hard going in the soft sand.

Now the wharf was more than five hundred yards distant. Heaton looked back and could see the white-clad figure of Captain Spencer passing through the illumination of the torches on the wharf.

"We got away just in time," said Heaton to himself. "And I'll let this bird go further. It wouldn't do to shoot so near or Tromp would be out digging around to see what was going on. If there's a hullabaloo it'll be found that I'm out of my room, and then my hash would be settled, if I killed this chap!"

Before long the fugitive went out on the hard, wet shingle, and proceeded down the beach. He plodded along with regular foot-falls, as if bound for a known destination. And much to Heaton's satisfaction, the stranger was going in the direction which was away from the plantation-house.

The grating of the other's shoe-soles on the hard sand gave Heaton a better guide as to the pace and position of his man than would have been possible if he had continued to walk in the dry sand. And now that Heaton had reached the limits of the palm-grove, he got out on the beach himself, and followed the rim of the jungle.

Once more the fugitive stopped to listen. There was only the low murmur of the surf now, and the rattle of the tops of the scrub palms, for they were well away from the sound of the noises of the wharf, and out of sight around a bend of beach. Heaton stopped, and presently the man ahead struck a match under cover of his helmet and lighted a cigaret.

That he was not at all sure of his safety yet was proved by the fact that he made efforts to keep the glow of his cigaret concealed. A dim radiance at times revealed his position, when the cigaret flamed up under the draft of being smoked. But he kept so quiet for such long periods that

Heaton wondered if his man had not slipped back to the soft sand, walked silently and hidden himself in the brush. In that case, Heaton might have passed him.

But each time Heaton worried on this score, he was always reassured by the betraying glow of the cigaret. And for another half-hour both of them went along the beach, stopping at intervals.

Heaton felt they had gone far enough for his purposes. And at the next halt, he crept forward with cautious steps, taking advantage, when he moved, of any flurry of wind in the palms. By this method, he judged that he had come within twenty feet of his enemy.

"Who's that?" came out of the darkness.

And then there was a momentary glow of the cigaret down on the ground. The other had either dropped flat, or was burying the cigaret.

Heaton made no reply.

"Answer—I can make you out! If you don't speak, I'll shoot!" came the second challenge.

"From his voice, I'd say he's not sure there's anybody following him at all," thought Heaton. "He's just suspicious, and a bit off on his nerves."

Heaton got down on the sand as noiselessly as he could, dropping first to his knees, and then stretching himself forward with his hands extended, until he was face down. The pistol was held out before him.

"There may be some truth in what he said about seeing me," reasoned Heaton. "There may be a lighter streak behind me, that showed me up to him, and maybe his eyes are good in the dark."

Still, he doubted that the other was aware of being followed really. He might have heard a suspicious sound, but it was not to be supposed that a man who worried at all about having somebody at his heels would dare to smoke. So Heaton felt safe enough.

For twenty minutes there was not a sound made, nor anything to indicate that there were two men concealed on that wild stretch of beach. At intervals, Heaton could hear a faint cry from some of the workers back at the steamer, and now and then the sharp rasping of wire tackle when the whips jammed in the blocks under a load. Dogs barked somewhere up in the hills, where there were a few native huts. Otherwise, there was the loneliness of jungle and sea.

Then there came to the ears of Heaton the sound of some one moving on a trail in the jungle not far away. And at once a light wavered and swayed through the

brush, sending out thousands of slivers of brilliance like a candle seen through a sieve.

The soft padding of feet told Heaton that the man in the trail was a native. Only bare feet on a hard-packed trail made such a sound. He glimpsed the lantern for an instant when it passed a spot which was openly visible from the beach. It was a ship's lantern that had evidently been borrowed to light some native worker home for his supper.

"If that fool comes out on the beach near me, I'm in a bad jam," thought Heaton.

He worried a little about it, for the winding trail at times brought the native close to the shore, and at others veered him away.

But the lantern went on past the position where Heaton lay, moving in the direction of the wharf. The other man was also safe enough now from being exposed in light, for he was beyond in the same direction from which the native with the light had come.

Then, without warning, the native broke from the brush to the beach, behind Heaton. For an instant he was certain that he was visible against the light, in plain sight of the other man. But the lantern swung on, making a bright patch which danced on the sand in a limited area and showing a distorted shadow of gigantic size.

"If that blasted fool of a native keeps the light high, and swings clear to the left, I'm safe," breathed Heaton.

But the native stopped. He appeared to be hunting for something at the water's edge.

"Heard a crab, and wants to catch it, or he's decided to loaf a little on his way and hunt for shellfish," Heaton told himself.

He had his head turned back over his shoulder to see what happened.

What did not happen could not have been more dangerous to Heaton. To his dismay, the native set the lantern down on the beach and walked away in the direction of the wharf.

"I'm caught!" gasped Heaton. "I'll stick up against that blasted lantern like a dead whale washed ashore and I'll jolly well get pinked with a bullet!"

He did not dare move. It was possible that Dannrether's man had moved into the brush, or was standing at the edge of the jungle, and his angle of vision would not bring Heaton against the light. If that were true, Heaton was safe.

He could hear the receding footsteps of the native, moving in aimless fashion, as if feeling with his bare feet for some object in the wet sand. As the minutes slipped

away, Heaton became certain that the danger he feared did not exist; that his man had pushed on silently down the beach, and was out of sight by this time, even with the lantern where it was.

Heaton gave a start. There was a flash and a report. A bullet sprayed sand into his face, and he was momentarily blinded. But as his eyes were shut he rolled quickly to one side, toward the edge of the jungle.

Another bullet showered him with sand.

Heaton heard the native cry out in alarmed surprise. There was a rustling in the brush in the direction from which the bullets had come, and Heaton knew the other man had fired and darted into cover.

Leaping to his feet, Heaton raced down the beach away from the lantern, and away from the direction of the wharf. He did not want to be seen by the native, and he did not want to be a target any more against the light of the lantern.

He wanted to pass the position of the gunman in the jungle and have the advantage of darkness at his back. Also, he desired to keep the gunman from escaping along the beach, to hold him in the brush, where his movements could be traced by the rustling of the leaves.



STOPPING a few yards beyond the point where his enemy had taken to the jungle, Heaton looked back. The native grabbed up his lantern, and jabbering in a panic of fear, scurried back into the trail and ran into the hills.

"Good!" whispered Heaton. "That's the way I wanted him to go, and gave him room to make it, so he won't give any alarm at the wharf and start somebody out to investigate. Now I can fight out this business here alone, and nobody be any the wiser!"

He waited a while, listening for any sound that would give warning that his man was seeking to get better hidden in the jungle. It was almost impossible for a man to move in the dry, thick brush without being heard, and Heaton was convinced that Dannrether's hired slayer was content to remain hidden where he was and wait for daylight.

"You might as well give up," called Heaton. "I've got you and I've been waiting for you, so everything is fixed so you can't get away from this island."

There was no reply. Heaton resumed presently, in a voice of studied casualness:

"All hands on this island—whites and

natives—know who you are, and why you came. They're all against you. No use thinking you can fool anybody, or that it'll do you any good to plug me. You'll not get away alive unless you give up."

That, of course, was not true. There was not a person on Goorabaya who knew the reason for Heaton's presence at Tromp's hotel or that he was expecting anybody. As a matter of fact, Heaton had kept under cover himself so far as he could.

He knew he could not wait for daylight himself. He was supposed to be sick in his room at the hotel, and he must get back before daylight, especially if he killed this man in the brush.

Heaton also knew well that no matter how things turned, he was in a tight situation. He might be killed himself; if he succeeded in killing the other man, there was every chance of being held for murder. The success of the duel on the beach for Heaton would only shift the danger from Dannrether's man to the police, and Heaton wanted to settle things so that no suspicion would attach to himself. Having played sick, he could have little defense if he were involved in a murder that took place while he was missing from his room.

There was a sound of excited natives chattering up in the hills. The native with the lantern had evidently spread the story of the firing on the beach.

"All right," declared Heaton to the enveloping darkness, "if you won't come out, I'll go get you." He made a few bold steps forward, scuffing the sand noisily, and then lay down.

There came a rustling from the brush. Heaton could not tell what it meant. Either the other man was worming his way deeper into the jungle, or getting clear of the brush for the beach again.

"Anyway, I know where he is now," Heaton told himself with satisfaction.

He raised himself on hands and knees and began creeping forward toward the spot where he had heard the rustling. It was possible to cover ground by this method without the chance of stepping on a stone or bit of coral that would turn under his feet, or a bit of dried palm-leaf that would crackle and snap and so betray his position.

He gained what he estimated to be thirty feet—five times his own length. That, he judged, was about half the distance to his man. It took at least twenty minutes to

gain that distance, for he waited a few minutes between each advance to listen.

Heaton hoped he could get close enough to fire three rapid shots, roll out of the way a few feet, and if there were any return fire, take a snap shot at the flash of the other's gun. It would be possible at such close range to hit a man on the three first shots and kill or wound him, for Heaton was a crack shot at such work in the dark. He had that peculiar sense and ability to send a bullet straight at a noise.

That sound for which Heaton was waiting, came in a few minutes; a cautious scraping of sand, such as might be made by the pressure of a foot. It was close and straight ahead.

Heaton fired once, with a slightly upward angle, again without any interval on a level, and put a third bullet after the second. As he pulled the trigger the last time, he threw himself to one side, and lifted himself on an elbow, with gun ready to catch a return flash.

The three shots spat from his pistol so rapidly that they were almost one report. He saw the sand before him illumined in the triple flash, but no figure was within the limited zone of the momentary light.

"He's not close in front, after all," thought Heaton, "and if he fires——"

At that instant a surprising thing happened. Instead of the expected shot in return, Heaton was suddenly overwhelmed with a body that hurtled down upon him and, striking him with crushing impact, drove his face into the sand.

For a second Heaton did not realize what had happened. Then he grappled with the man who had thrown himself across him. In Heaton's realization that his enemy was upon him, he lost his pistol—let it go, for he needed unhampered hands to grip his adversary. Throwing himself upward with all the force he could muster, Heaton found himself dragged backward and down. His man hung to him, clutching him about the middle with one arm, and with the other hand groping for his throat.

Heaton made a desperate effort to gain and hold his feet, but it was of no use. The other had him overweighted on account of his hold and they both went to the sand again. This time Heaton was on his back and the other man partly under him, tearing and fighting for control of Heaton's arms.

They continued to grapple for a hold, neither being certain yet just how to gain the advantage. Heaton expected to feel a

knife in his body; his hand had encountered cold steel. It was in the hand of the enemy, but Heaton had both hand and steel under the left side of his coat, and pressed both tightly against a hip bone. Heaton was suddenly aware that what was gripped in that hand was not a blade, but a long-barreled revolver.

He felt a searing heat against his flesh. The revolver had been fired under the coat. The fabric was ignited by the flash of the powder, and Heaton was conscious of the odor of burning cloth and caught a glimpse of tiny glowing embers running round the hole in the coat.

"Fire away!" he gasped. "I've got you!" He kept the barrel of the revolver tight against his hip, knowing that the muzzle stood clear of his body, and that it must be kept there.

One hand holding hand and gun under his coat, Heaton twisted and struggled to gain mastery. But the other man was no weakening. He had a strength that called for all Heaton's power in holding that revolver in a safe position.

They struggled, thrashing about on the sand, for twenty minutes or more. They began slugging each other, striking wildly, haphazardly, in hope of landing a blow that would put an end to the fight.

Heaton got the worst of this battle, for he was more concerned in striving to get a hold that would put his man out of business, and so get that revolver. His enemy fought to get free and to take the gun with him. But Heaton still clung to it, in spite of an occasional blow in the face that staggered him and filled his eyes with sand and blood from his own nose.

Gradually both weakened in their efforts, but still they plowed up the sand as they flopped about, now one down under the other, now locked together and swaying on their feet.

They found themselves on the hard wet sand, and from that they got into the wash of the surf; so that when a roller came up, their legs were laved by the water.

Heaton had conserved his strength in spite of the punishment he took. He was playing to get an arm locked behind his man's neck.

"I'll have him before he's done," thought Heaton. "He slipped off his coat before he jumped me and that gives him some advantage. But I'll have him!"

Finally, he maneuvered his free arm just

right, and got the hold he wanted. Dann-rether's man was steadily and slowly forced over on his side, so that the revolver was under him. Heaton began forcing his head back. It was locked in the crook of Heaton's right elbow and there was no escape from that lock. The fight was at an end, and Heaton knew it. The other had to submit or have his neck broken.

The gun slowly slipped from weakening fingers, and with a groan the mastered man collapsed.

Heaton was not to be trapped by a pretended surrender. He made sure of that by clinging to the revolver and the limp hand that was under him, and squirming in such fashion that the weapon was gradually worked free and jammed into the sand. Then Heaton rolled over in such a way that the gun was under him, while he maintained his grip on the captive.

They lay still for a few minutes, both gasping, and the combers washing over them to their knees.



"LET up on me!" begged the prisoner. "It's no use. I'm caught. I quit!"

"You picked the wrong bird that time, eh?" spluttered Heaton.

"I've—I've had—enough!" coughed the other weakly.

"I'd drag you down into the surf for a cent," said Heaton grimly, "and drown you! That might be the best way out of it, but I want to talk with you, so I'll give you a fair show. It'll be a fairer show than I'd get from you, you hired killer! So don't start any funny business with a knife or anything like that, or I'll finish you as I would a snake!"

He relaxed his pressure on the man's neck, wanting to make certain of control of his hands. The revolver was disposed of for the time being, and Heaton knew that if he had to stay there until daylight, he would be able to find his own pistol up on the dry sand.

The prisoner made no further attempt at resistance. He now seemed willing enough to give up. Heaton pinioned one of his hands under him, and then gropingly searched the other for a knife or other weapon. There was nothing. With a quick movement, Heaton got both hands of his prisoner and dragged him up the beach.

Now Heaton slipped his own belt from round his waist, pulled out the automatic's magazines and, making a loop with the

buckle, secured his captive's wrists behind his back and pulled him down on the sand.

"What do you call yourself, anyhow?" asked Heaton.

"What does it matter what I call myself, now that you've got me?" retorted the other wearily.

"I don't know that it does," admitted Heaton. "And I don't much care."

"You appear to know well enough who I am."

"You mean we've met before?" asked Heaton.

"It's likely and possible. But what of it?"

"Well, I don't know all of Dannrether's thugs very well, of course," said Heaton. "But it's as plain as the end of my nose—and you've battered that pretty well—that I'll know one of 'em before I'm done with you."

There was no reply to that.

"All I wish," went on Heaton, "is that Dannrether'd come on this job himself. I wouldn't have been as easy on him as I'm going to be on you."

Still a silence, and then after a few minutes, the prisoner spoke.

"Oh, Dannrether ain't so bad, if you know him well," said the bound man.

His tone had changed suddenly. He seemed to take new hope from the assurance that Heaton was going to be "easy" with him, and glad that the battle was over.

"He's got something up his sleeve that I don't know anything about," mused Heaton. "There's probably another like him still hid aboard the *Labuan*, and this bird knows I'm done for if I take him back to the hotel. Captain Spencer, maybe, will help him out. I'd better play a canny game. He's too satisfied at being in my hands like this, and he's playing for time."

"Why can't we go back to the steamer, and have a little comfort?" suggested the prisoner. "Or the hotel?"

Heaton gurgled with laughter.

"Say! You kind of enjoy being captured, don't you? So you want to go back to the steamer, or the hotel! I thought you felt mighty easy in your mind for a man in the particular kind of jam you're in—caught on a killing job for Dannrether!"

"You know it, and I've admitted as much," said the other. "What's the use of talking about it any more or my trying to bluff. You've won. That's all."

"Not a bit of use talking about it," admitted Heaton. "But we don't go back to

the hotel; not till the *Labuan* has sailed. And she goes out at daylight, so you don't need to look in that direction for any help."

"Oh, I'm satisfied to stay here, if that suits you. Might as well sit here as anywhere, I suppose. I only thought of having a little stimulant, and thought you might think the same. You're pretty well roughed up."

"Everybody happy!" declared Heaton. "So far, so good! But, say, how much did Dannrether pay you to come here and drill me?"

The other hesitated before he replied.

"Not so much as you might think," he said. "I got five hundred to come and see what I could do, and two thousand more if I finished you off."

Heaton laughed.

"Cheap at the price!" he pronounced ironically. "I rather thought it'd be worth more to him to put me out, and stop me from appearing as a witness against him when he's arrested."

"Cheap, yes," said the prisoner. "But I happened to need the money. And I never really intended to kill you. If I had, I could have done it when that lantern showed you up. Instead, when you tried to creep up on me, I threw a small stone ahead of you, and you fired at that. Then I jumped you. Why, I could have blown half a dozen bullets through you, instead of taking a chance by grabbing you."

Heaton considered that. It seemed reasonable enough. He could not understand why his man preferred a hand-to-hand battle when a bullet would have served the purpose.

"You know, I'm half-willing to believe what you say," he admitted.

"It's true," said the other without any attempt to insist. "I got my five hundred and that's the last Dannrether'll ever see of me. That's the only reason I took his money."

"Is that straight?" asked the surprised Heaton.

"Certainly it's straight. I'd be a fool to murder a man—especially to try and kill a man of your type—for twenty-five hundred, gold. Suppose I did? And went back to Dannrether to collect the balance? Why, he could laugh at me! I'd be a murderer, and he could turn me in to the police. Anyhow, he wouldn't have to pay me. No, I'd be a fool to fall for anything like that!"

"Somebody would be a fool, either you or Dannrether," agreed Heaton.

"What do you intend to do with me?"

"That remains to be decided. I intended to kill you, of course, if I had to, but I see no necessity for that now."

"That's something to know," said the prisoner with a light and jaunty tone.

"What's your name?"

"Carlin. Tom Carlin."

"Never heard of that name, if it's a straight name."

"It's the name I'm known by all over the China Coast, and that's the best I can do."

"How long you been with Dannrether's crowd?"

"Couple of years. Nearer three, come to think of it."

"How many of you private killers has he got on his staff?"

"Nobody knows that and I don't know that he's got any. We never know the inside. Dannrether's too smooth a customer for that."

"You don't have to tell me," said Heaton.

"What do you intend to do with me?"

"I told you I'd think it over. All depends on how much information you cough up and what it's worth to me. If you play good dog, I may let you go on your way. But if you don't answer my questions honestly, I'll hold you at the hotel for the next coast-guard cutter, or take you to Manila in the next boat that comes along for that port."

"Maybe I can't tell you what you want to know," said Carlin. "I don't carry all Dannrether's secrets around with me."

"No, but there's a lot of things you know of just by what you've seen or heard, moving around with his gang."

"And if I don't know the particular things you want to find out, you'll turn me over to the-coast guard, eh?"

"I'll do that very thing!" said Heaton.

"But we won't go into that now. I'd rather go into details by daylight when I can look you over. I like to see a man's face and the look in his eyes, when I talk important business to him. And my business with you is mighty important, or I'd finish you here and now."

"But I haven't been close to Dannrether or his crowd, for more than a year," objected Carlin. "I don't believe I can tell you much. All I can do, is try and suit you."

"You'll find it worth while to suit me," said Heaton with cold significance. "I won't stand for any monkey business. If you don't know, that's your trouble and all

the worse for you. It'll mean that you'll be brigged by the coast-guard, and I'll bring charges against you of coming here under Dannrether's pay for the purpose of murdering me. I may not make that charge stick, but I'll bet a hat there'll be a few other little matters that the police'll want to talk to you about. Most of Dannrether's men are wanted. That's what makes 'em do what Dannrether orders. And he makes 'em do a killing job now and then."

"I'm not worried about what the police will have to say to me," said Carlin lightly. "You can turn me over to the coast-guard people if you like, but I'll do the best I can with your questions. Of course, I'd prefer to hang here till a boat comes in for Java, and to never go back to Dannrether at all. What I want to do is chuck him and his crowd."

"A pious ambition!" declared Heaton. "Only it's too bad you didn't think of that when you were aboard the *Labuan*, and come on up to the hotel and send word in to me that you'd decided to quit Dannrether."

"How'd you know I slipped out of the *Labuan*?" asked Carlin.

"I knew Dannrether'd send somebody, and under cover. So I kept a close eye on the steamer from the instant she docked, in spite of the fact that Captain Spencer swore to Tromp that he hadn't a passenger."

"He didn't have one," laughed Carlin. "I stowed away and paid his Number One boy a fat price to hide me and feed me."

"Then Captain Spencer isn't in the know?"

"Not a bit of it. And the fact that I sneaked off the *Labuan* ought to prove to you that I had no intention of going gunning for you."

"I can't see it that way at all," argued Heaton. "What your dock-jump does prove to me is that you didn't want to gun for me till the *Labuan* was gone. And you didn't want Spencer to see you."

"All right, have it your own way," assented Carlin. "Do we sit here all night on this black beach?"

"All night!" said Heaton.

"Look in my upper shirt-pockets. I've got some smokes in there. I'm wet and chilly, and so are you. A smoke would brighten us up a bit."

"I've got my own smokes," retorted Heaton.

He fumbled in his pockets and got out his cigarets. He lighted one and gave it to Carlin, and lighted another for himself. And

for the balance of the night they sat and smoked, Heaton holding the end of the belt which kept Carlin helpless.



THE morning sun, presaged by a brilliant rose-colored sky which gradually toned down to streaks of pearl on a field of gray, revealed the pair of haggard and unkempt men. Heaton's face was swelled and covered with dry blood; his eyes were puffed and blackened, and Carlin's face was spattered with the sanguinary signs of their battle. Their clothes were dirty, and both men were wholly bedraggled by having been soaked by the wet shingle or the wash of combers over their legs. Sand oozed from pockets.

In the first light of dawn, they sat and stared at each other.

Heaton found Carlin to be an altogether different type of man from what he expected: Not yet thirty, tall and well-built, and of personality wholly agreeable. The young man was clean-shaven, inclined to ruddiness through his tropical tan, with brown eyes and brown hair. In fact, Carlin was prepossessing so far as his outward appearance went, and in spite of his ruined clothes.

He was not at all the man one would expect to be a professional slayer. He might have traveled in the best of society when in his normal condition, for his clothes were well-cut, obviously expensive, though inclined to be of the flashy style of the young men who spend most of their time in hotel bars with gamblers and such ilk.

"I'd hardly take you for one of Dannrether's men," grumbled Heaton, in something akin to disappointment that Carlin had turned out to be a man who could pass for a gentleman.

Carlin grinned sheepishly. His teeth were white and strong, and there was something likable in that grin, in spite of a cut and swelled underlip.

"That's where Dannrether fools a lot of folks," he replied. "He picks his men, and has the kind that the police won't slant an eye at as they walk down the street. Oh, Dannrether—he's keen!"

Heaton grunted and looked about for his helmet. It was up on the beach, close to Carlin's, and there was the latter's coat.

"Come on up here till I collect my gun," said Heaton. "I'm not going to bother and hold to you like you were a strayed calf,

same as I have all night. If you start anything, I'm in no temper to hand you any soft stuff."

They scrambled to their feet, Heaton wary. When he had regained his automatic, he released the belt behind Carlin, but left the loop in place in his hands.

"Might as well stay trussed up," he warned, taking a hasty glance at his weapon and blowing sand out of its exterior mechanism.

He shifted the magazine to make sure the gun was fully loaded, and tested how it worked. Then, clapping Carlin's helmet on the prisoner, Heaton walked down to the water's edge, salvaged Carlin's revolver, and washed his face in the surf.

There came the boom of a whistle, and they stood for a few minutes watching the bend of the beach which hid the wharf. Presently they saw the *Labuan* nosing out slowly through the reef-gaps.

"We can move along and catch our breakfast," remarked Heaton.

He returned and picked up Carlin's coat and threw it over his shoulder.

"March!" he commanded, with a jerk of his head in the direction of the hotel.

"Oh, say now!" pleaded Carlin. "You're not going to walk me into the settlement tied up like this, are you?"

"Sure I am!" retorted Heaton. "Not that I'm afraid of you, but you're a dangerous man, and I want to prove it from the first look Tromp has. He's the boss around these diggings, and it'll be easier to have him understand just what you are from the jump, than to argue and explain. Go ahead!"

"Be dramatic if you want to," commented Carlin with a disgusted shrug of his shoulders.

"That's what they all pull, when they're made to do something they don't like," retorted Heaton easily. "You were the dramatic chap from the beginning, with your sneaking off the steamer to plug me for Dannrether. You started these dramatics, young man, so take your medicine nice and pretty."

Carlin trudged along ahead, moodily silent, and not in any special hurry to get anywhere. He was worn out, as was Heaton, by the battle of the night and the vigil of waiting for day. They were both unsteady on their feet, and before they had gone far, they walked with wavering

staggers, like a couple of men dragging themselves home after a drinking-bout.

As they proceeded, they watched the *Labuan* heading away for the north and pitching gently in the smooth swells. She heliographed the sun back to them from the bright work of her bridge.

Before long Carlin began to flounder aimlessly. He staggered toward the rim of the jungle, as if seeking shade, and before he reached the brush, collapsed to the sand.

"I'm done up—weak as a cat!" he whined when Heaton came up to him, and stood looking down. "I've got to have a rest, if you don't mind. Got heated in our fight, and then chilled to the bone."

"Oh, take your time," said Heaton. "I'm all in myself. But don't try to pull a jungle-jump, or I'll wing you."

Carlin laughed wearily, his head shaking from side to side.

"I've no stomach for kicking around this island with you after me," he said. "But I would like to settle a few things, as long as we're having a rest. Then I might walk into the hotel with you like a decent man."

Heaton slumped down on the sand and sat cross-legged with his gun between his knees.

"What do you want to chin about?"

"You might ask me your questions about Dannrether. If I could answer——"

Heaton shook his head.

"Not now. I want to clear up my brain before I do any quizzing."

"We might reach an agreement on this by some other method?" suggested Carlin.

Heaton blinked at him.

"Method? What're you driving at?"

"I could make it worth your while to let me clear out of here in the next boat."

"Nothing doing on that."

"Not if I was to give you the five hundred in gold that Dannrether gave me?"

Heaton's head snapped back at that, and he scanned his prisoner with suspicious eyes.

"Would you call it quits?" pressed Carlin.

"I've the cash on me, in my belt."

"I don't want Dannrether's money, or yours."

"I'll make it a thousand," urged Carlin. "What good can you get out of making a row about me? You can't prove anything, and you know it. Let's be practical, after making a pair of fools of ourselves all night, it'll be all right for you to tell your story to the coast-guard people. But what if they

don't believe you? And you've no evidence against me."

Heaton considered the matter. He was weary, and he had difficulty in keeping his chin from falling on his chest, he was so overpowered by fatigue and the want of sleep. He knew Carlin was telling the truth, and a thousand dollars would be a boon not to be thrust aside.

"I owe Tromp more than a hundred," he told himself mentally. "And I'm dead broke. I could use the thousand in getting to Manila and fighting Dannrether from there with the aid of the authorities. That'd be better than holding this bird here and sticking around myself, hopelessly in debt and without a copper clacker. Tromp'll never let me go, even in the coast-guard cutter with this fellow, and I'll probably have to make a borrow from the skipper of the cutter——"

"I've got that thousand molding in my belt," broke in Carlin on Heaton's thoughts.

"I don't care if you have," said Heaton crossly, "I don't——"

"In my belt wrapped in silk," persisted Carlin, who seemed to divine what was passing in Heaton's mind. "Look for yourself. I've a little more than that, but I'd need it to get clear of this place. You're a fair man and you won't strip me of every cent, even after what we've been through."

"There's a trap in it," said Heaton, shaking himself to keep his eyes from closing entirely. "If you're willing to pay up to get away, you probably know how you can beat me before you go. And you'd probably bring charges of robbery against me, to gum up the whole game and put me in the wrong. No, I won't make any such a deal. You belong to the police. I can get all the money I want in Manila and the cutter'll take us both there for nothing, if I bring this criminal charge against you."

"I'll give you all I've got—nearly two thousand!" argued Carlin. "Don't be a fool. This business of turning me over to the cutter puts no fat on your ribs. I've got my reason for buying off. Yes, it is that if I'm taken back to Manila this way, Dannrether'll have me shot by some of his men, for not finishing *you*. I'll take my chances without cash, if you'll call it quits."

"Climb on your feet and push on a ways," said Heaton. "I'll think it over as we walk."

Carlin obeyed.

"I rather think you'll see it my way and I

don't intend to argue you into a good thing, old man. I can take my chances with the cutter, if it comes to that."

Heaton realized that Dannrether was the man he wanted to get, and that the money Carlin offered could be of infinite value, but he suspected that Carlin was plotting to turn the tables, and that Carlin was too dangerous a man to trust in any bargain.

"And maybe Tromp's in with him, for all I know," mused Heaton. "No, I'll stick it out just as it is."

As they rounded the shore-line that brought them into sight of the hotel, Carlin stopped and turned.

"Well, how about it?" he asked.

"I'm set on holding you," replied Heaton.

Carlin went over his argument again in detail, but Heaton doggedly held on, and waved his prisoner ahead.

"Go on, as you are," he commanded. "I take no chances."

Carlin obeyed, crestfallen and discouraged. It was plain that he had built up his hopes of reaching an agreement with Heaton, but when he realized that there was nothing more to be said, he entered the palm grove and walked stolidly to the veranda of the hotel.

Tromp came out, pipe in hand, squinting into the sunlight. For several minutes he was unable to recognize Heaton, and when he fully comprehended that this stained and battered man who came with a gun in his hand, driving a bound prisoner before him, was the supposed invalid who occupied the upper room, he was speechless with amazement.

"Fetch a couple of shots of gin, and some chow," commanded Heaton, as he waved to Carlin to sit down in a veranda chair.

"Heaton!" gasped Tromp. "And you be sick! I—I do not understand—with a gun—and so much fighting!"

Heaton dropped into a chair opposite Carlin, leaned an elbow on a little table and his unsteady head on a hand, while the revolver rested on a knee.

"Oh, shut up, Tromp! Send the chink out with the drink and grub! There'll be plenty of time to talk!"

Carlin looked up at Tromp.

"I demand that you free my hands," said the prisoner. "If you don't, I'll have you arrested for complicity in this thing! It's an outrage!"

Tromp peered down at him. "Where you come from?" he demanded.

"I was aboard the *Labuan* and I went for a walk down the beach last evening. This outlaw followed me, fired at me and made some foolish charges about my having come to shoot him. It's a lie. I'm a friend of Captain Spencer, and——"

"Chuck that stuff!" commanded Heaton, lifting his gun. There was menace in the gesture and in the tone.

Carlin dropped back into his chair with a disgusted sigh.

"A friend of Captain Spencer!" spluttered Tromp.

He turned and stared at Heaton, his blue eyes narrowing, and a look of craft in them.

"So! You play sick, eh? You want to shoot somebody, eh? You lie to me, eh? And a friend of Captain Spencer——!"

He threw up a hand and wagged his head knowingly, and leaned forward to peer at Carlin again.

Heaton roused himself from the stupor of weariness that threatened to overwhelm him, now that the dangers of the night were over. He sensed a greater danger here for there was something in Tromp's eyes that could not be fathomed at the moment.

"I'm not out of the woods yet," thought Heaton. "Tromp has something up his sleeve. He knows more than I do and I'll bet a hat he's in on this with Spencer or Carlin. A rig-up, that's what I've got to look out for now."

The Chinese who helped in the tap-room came to the wicker door and looked out. Heaton ordered a drink, for he knew he needed something to pick up his fatigued body and mind, else he could never cope with Tromp's craftiness.

Tromp turned and nodded an assent to Heaton's order, and the hotel keeper's lips had on them the faint trace of a smile. It seemed to Heaton more like a look of exultation, a covert triumph, than a smile. And the big man's eyes glowed with a new light, which still was tinged with amazement.

"You know this man, eh?" demanded Tromp.

"I know him well enough," said Heaton wearily. "And don't you stick a paw into this thing. It's a matter for the next cutter."

"Oh, he do something, eh?" pressed Tromp, laying his long-stemmed china pipe across a table with infinite care. He had

suddenly developed the smooth motions of a cat and his eyes moved slowly.

"He's done enough," commented Heaton. "Hands off, I say! It's none of your business. I'm running things till the cutter comes."

"Oh, I see," remarked Tromp softly, his eyes glittering. "You run my place for me, eh! Well, we see about that, quick! You come here false. You play sick. You not pay me, and you have charge, eh? Well, you look out what you do!"

He turned slowly and leaned down to peer into Carlin's face again, and then, still moving in that same slow but cat-like way, he swung through the wicker door, and called to the Chinese to bring food.

Heaton waited a minute, his ear lifted toward the door, to follow Tromp's movements.

"You move," he whispered to Carlin, "and I'll drill you. Or if Tromp tries to save you, I'll put a bullet into you just the same, so——"

He did not finish, but sprang through the door, in pursuit of Tromp.

The big man was staring at the wall inside the tap-room, his nose within three inches of some posters that warned mariners of derelicts in the China Sea, new-found reefs and other governmental data. As Tromp saw Heaton looking in, the big man suddenly leaned against the wall and covered something with his hand—a paper placard.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

Then his hand closed over that paper, crumpling it. With his hand still against the wall, but the fingers closed, he turned to the Chinese behind the bar.

"Hurry with the drink, you loafer!" he commanded. "The gentleman ordered——"

Heaton leaped forward and seized that fat hand.

"Drop it!" he snapped, throwing up his gun. "You're at something smooth and you're playing something off on me for Captain Spencer and Dannrether. If you try to fool me, I'll plug——"

Tromp's face reddened and his lips lifted in a snarl. He threw the paper at Heaton.

"You are loco!" he grumbled.

Heaton lifted the paper from the floor, and taking a precautionary glance through the open *kajang* at the figure of Carlin outside, slowly unfolded the paper and studied it. There was the picture of a man on it, and the face of the picture was the face of Carlin!

But the name under the picture—it was not Carlin. It was another name, and the man was wanted in Hong Kong in connection with the robbery of a bank. The charge was murder.

"Not Dannrether's man!" gasped Heaton. "He's not here to take a shot at me. Not to get me for Dannrether!"

His hands shook, and again he looked out to the veranda at Carlin, who was peering into the tap-room, curious, cringing, even in terror. His suavity was gone, and his face revealed his desperation.

"So!" called Heaton. "I know now why you took it so easy when you saw I mistook you for Dannrether's gunman and why you were willing to pay me to get away. You had me fooled and it looked easy——"

"You fool me!" roared Tromp at Heaton in sudden fury. "You cheat me! You not let this man come to my place, but you chase him up the beach and catch him! But for you, playing sick, I have this fellow myself!"

Heaton burst out in laughter and danced a couple of gay steps in glee.

"I'm staked!" he cried. "Now I can get back to Manila and fight Dannrether's gang and get my dinky plantation back! If I hadn't been watching out for a gunman, this'd never come my way. My prisoner—he was sneaking in here to escape, so——"

"Oh, you make me tired!" grumbled Tromp. "Anyway, some good luck for me. You never have a cent to pay for three weeks. I know. You were broke all the time. Now, anyway, you can pay me what you owe out of all that money!"

For the police circular which Tromp had tried to hide with his hand, offered a reward of ten thousand dollars for the capture of the man on the veranda.



THE BRAVO

by F. R. Buckley

ONE does not read far in the history of the Italian Middle Ages, or in fiction dealing with the period, without making the acquaintance of that sinister, yet attractive, and accordingly puzzling figure, the bravo; the chain-mailed, steel-gloved hired assassin who seems, at first glance, to be the prototype of our modern gunman; but who, on closer examination, is seen to differ from the gunman at so many points as to make the resemblance hazy.

If it were possible to take a war-veteran, a lobbyist, a debt-collector, a ward-heeler, an executioner, a gunman and a detective; to dissolve them in boiling superstition, and to make one man out of the solution, the bravo of the early Medici ducal period might be reproduced. The miracle being improbable, it is not to be expected that we shall look upon the bravo's like again.

Usually, he appears to have been a soldier; possibly wounded past further straightforward fighting; perhaps converted to the cynical idea that killing is killing, no matter what the circumstances, and that the killer might as well sell his services in the most advantageous market. He was carried on the payroll of the nobleman employing him, like any other servant; though, like the modern lobbyist, he was usually listed under some more pleasant name. He might be a guardsman, or a groom, or a musician—nominally; actually, his essential duty was to follow any person pointed out to him by his master, and stab that person to death as quickly and as unostentatiously as possible.

To avoid embarrassing slips, he used his dagger in connection with a steel gantlet—indeed, the dagger was often attached to the weighty glove; so that the stab he gave resembled a blow from a needle-pointed pickax, and rarely needed repetition, though the victim wore mail. The best of armor—except full plate—left some vital spot more or less exposed, and the bravo had a mental map of every likely hiatus; it was his business; he was diligent in it; his neck answered for that.

Sometimes, his dagger satisfied a private

spite, though as a rule noblemen preferred to avenge injuries to their feelings with their own hands. Witness the murder of Bianca Capello's complaisant, but swollen-headed, husband by some of the noblest swords in Florence.

The bravo's specialties seem to have been executions of eminent criminals whom it was not advisable to hang or behead with due process of law; and the cutting of Gordian knots in trade or politics. For instance—the Medici were traders in an enormous way of business; doubtless they had bad debts; and certainly the inter-city laws of the period were not such as to give full satisfaction to creditors who were also dukes, and hot-headed dukes, at that.

What more natural than that, finding cash collection of an out-of-town debt impossible, they should send the bravo to distrain on the debtor's life—"to encourage the others?" And without doubt, the method would prove a check on fraudulent bankruptcy.

For political lobbying and for negotiation generally the bravo had unusual qualifications—I mean, of course, the high-class bravo. There were low ruffians who used the name; but similarly there were low ruffians who used the name of priest. The high-class bravo was close-mouthed; he could be trusted with money—his life being perpetually forfeit; and, if bribery failed, he had other methods at his immediate command. He was also unobtrusive, determined, devoted and incorruptible, which made him an excellent policeman when crowds raged against the authorities. As a marriage-broker—well, he didn't exactly deal in marriage; but he was eminently fitted, by his unobtrusiveness, his desperation and his entire cynicism, for his version of that office, too.

Of course, his additional accomplishments do not cancel the fact that he was a professional murderer; but if there be degrees of virtue in that profession, he was a more admirable murderer than his successors: The led-captain of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and the gunman of yesterday and today.



The Three Eggs

by F. St. Mars

Author of "The Journey," "Vikings Adrift," etc.

FIFTEEN inches of concentrated essence of dash. For the rest, a pair of simitar wings and a pair of spurs like steel spikes. Incidentally between wings and spurs was a body with legs on which the spurs grew. And the whole high-power, high-speed, high-tensioned, much more than high-couraged killing-machine—the whole sailed under the name and title of my Lord Peregrine.

He was a prince by blood, a hunter by calling, a bird of prey as a matter of course, and goodness and his own miraculous self alone knew where he had come from.

Upon a moment he had not been dreamed of. Upon the next he was a hissing steel wedge out of the perfect blue. Upon the next he was a calm, aloof, haughty, and masterful peregrine falcon, sitting upon an outcrop of the gray cliff, thoughtfully regarding a still-twitching stock-dove between his claws.

Now, the people of those parts viewed his advent with no enthusiasm at all. They were not human people, you understand, but feathered people—gulls, puffins, guillemots, rooks, jackdaws, rock and stock-doves, wheatears, choughs—a few—kestrels and a dozen others. In effect, they felt as a human community would have felt if a man-eating tiger had taken up lodgings in their midst.

They devoutly hoped that he would go away, but their hopes died at dawn next day, as water dies into sun-scorched sand. This because, when the first pale gray allowed them to look up, they beheld him perched on a fang of rock, staring out over the endless surge of the Atlantic.

The sun shot up over the horizon later,

touching all things with a raw red magic splendor, and— You know the howl of an unruly crowd that greets the first handful of mounted police? Such a howl went up then from those feathered people's throats at that moment, and every head, every beady, quick eye turned in one direction—upward.

The peregrine was on the wing.

He had flung himself outward and upward with a fierce suddenness that fairly took the watchers' breath away. Followed a few lightning-flash wing-beats, and then, light as a maiden's thoughts, swift as the wind, the impetuous, dashing, tireless winnow of the traveling peregrine.

They who hated him only less than they feared him watched him dwindle along the cliff's face in seconds, and, marveling still that he had not smitten them where they stood, turned to their daily business.

What he did, or where he went while he was away, my Lord Peregrine never said. He was a young bird, only just what naturalists call mature—that is to say, "of age"—and he felt in his veins that he required a mate to be a trouble and a worry to him for the rest of his days, for, like sensible men, peregrines are faithful for life.

Now, no man has ever seen a mature peregrine unpaired, and obviously an immature one can not take a mate, and yet, if one of a pair be shot or otherwise killed, the survivor at once departs on a journey of mystery and repairs to a secret place, and when it returns a new mate comes with it. No man has ever unraveled that journey of mystery or found that secret place.

These things may or may not explain why my Lord Peregrine saw fit to go on the bend for a certain number of days without

explanation given, leaving his feathered people to enjoy a false idea that he had departed forever; to fight and quarrel among themselves; to make nests and unmake them; to construct laws and break them, and to discover—as many republican men have also discovered—that they had only exchanged one tyrant for another and less knightly one—in this case a raven.

When he came back he found his new kingdom in wild disorder—a raven pillaging nests right and left, a carrion-crow in the home of the only other kestrel, and, worst of all, a chicken-hearted buzzard crowning his own pet fang of rock, expounding in a craven mew the law that he dare not enforce.

With the peregrine came another and larger bird, his new wife. She could give him a full two inches in length, had little arrow-shaped black markings on her brownish-white breast instead of the transverse, broken bars that he himself affected, and possessed all his haughty, intolerant, masterful, contemptuous, courageous spirit, slightly magnified.

My lord hurtled from the spot, about a mile along the cliff, where he first caught sight of his own chosen cove, to the fang of rock in one long streak, and the going of that buzzard was remarkable for many things, but delay was not one of them.

My lady sought the heavens, encompassing the blue dome with far-flung spirals, till she showed only as a pin-point of solitary life in the infinite. Therefore, when she calmly shut her wings, and tightened all her feathers, the result was rather startling. She was five minutes getting up there, and the same number of seconds coming down again, and that is—appalling.

A pair of carrion-crows had left their favorite occupation of bullying other birds—setting mothers for choice—into a state bordering upon nervous prostration, and were flapping round my lord, using language derogatory of the peace. They did not see my lady, but she had seen them, and—her aim was beautifully true. She hit one crow just as he circled out over the sea, and it was as if that crow had been smitten by forked lightning.

A thud, a burst of feathers, a hissing of mighty wings, as the falcon slid down and up again with the impetus of her own “stoop,” and the body of the crow, half-shorn of feathers, lifeless, crumpled, blasted

utterly, falling, falling, falling to the hungry sea far below.

Thus in two swift strokes the peregrines established their rule along the cliff. The next thing was to establish the House of Peregrine itself—for they were both come only lately to maturity—and that was a far more arduous business, one not to be accomplished in a breath.

They dined on a rock-pigeon, held up as it beat home from some inland feeding-ground that night, and went to roost side by side along a ledge.

The dawn that followed showed many things—a racing sea, a rampaging wind, and a laughing sun shining through quick showers, like one who weeps with joy.

This, however, was no reason why the falcons should go utterly and unashamedly mad; why my lady should dig out doggedly up wind for the matter of perhaps a mile, her mate following as if he were towed by a string; why they should come round with a rush, without reason as without warning, and, turning into steel-gray streaks, retire down wind again to the place of starting at a speed that would turn even a swift giddy; nor why they should choose to continue the maneuver till the human eye ached and the senses reeled with watching this thrice wonderful insanity. But that was nothing; they were but stretching their wings as yet.

What followed was worse than insanity; it was magic.

It pleased my lady to perch herself a thousand feet aloft, to lie on her back and rock with the gale, to surrender to it and be hurled into nowhere, and to come back again at a speed that made one half-doubt if she had ever gone at all.

And it pleased my lord, through and over and under these dizzy evolutions of his new wife, to walk the heavens in gigantic spirals—half a mile across each—till he went into the eye of the sun and was swallowed up by its splendor. Thereafter he returned. Straight as the meteor falls, and as fast, fell he toward his mate.

Was he mad, this falcon? Would he pulverize her beyond recognition of anything at all? Blot her out utterly? Oh, horrors; they had met! No, they had not met. And yet, it seemed— Oh, it was nothing; simply that she had, when an inch only separated her from oblivion, calmly turned a lightning-like somersault and let my lord

go hissing by, falling like a thunderbolt.

Thus they frolicked till high noon, and then they chose their house. A ledge was discarded, after due inspection, as too open. A taking, cup-shaped hollow behind an outcrop of cliff was abandoned, and a cave, which ran four feet in, was proof against rain and tempest, and was ten feet down the cliff from the top, was finally fixed upon as a fitting aerie.



A BIRD of such princely birth can not be expected to descend to architecture; that was the pleasure of lesser breeds; theirs to hunt and defy the wind and devour space at their pleasure. Therefore, the nest upon the floor of the cave, exactly eighteen inches from the mouth, was of Spartan simplicity. My lady scratched out a shallow pan eleven inches across, looked at it for five minutes, screamed an extraordinary, whining scream, "Kee-ark!" and announced that she was ready to begin housekeeping.

That was in March. The next day and every day after they hunted separately, as is the tribal custom, consorting only in the mad early morning aerial revels—when all the wild looked on in terror-stricken and scandalized stupefaction—and at sunset when each, returning from a long, lone day's chase, shouted "Kek-kek."

All night they roosted side by side—grim, implacable, haughty beyond any pride of human conception, yet true as the finest steel that was ever tempered by fire.

They would as soon have thought of failing to open wings and tail at the bottom of one of their aerial dives, and thus be dashed to pulp on the earth beneath, as they would have thought of infidelity to each other.

It was on the evening of April seventeenth that my lord returned to the aerie. He was hot, and he was tired, and his temper was, like his plumes, ruffled. If, however, one is blessed by Providence with a wife two whole inches longer than oneself—and that is a lot where these birds are concerned—one keeps one's temper on the curb; it pays, and it is more healthy.

He had given chase to a dunlin. A small, lean, scythe-winged plover, up to every trick of the trade in baffling birds of prey, and known in England—goodness alone knows why—as an "ox-bird." It had coaxed him into a fine, ringing flight, had risen quite nicely to receive his death-dealing stoop,

and then retired precipitantly up a drain, leaving only a derisive harsh whistle behind.

But to return. My lord climbed to a height of or thousand feet, and then came down again, with tightly closed wings, in a mad dive that ended suddenly in outflung pinions, fan-spread tail, and body thrown back, at the very mouth of the cave. Then he stood very still, peering, in an odd way falcons have, under low brows.

His wife was standing quite motionless beside the nest, looking at something which lay therein. I do not quite think that either of them fully understood the meaning—though they did the sacredness—of that which they beheld. It was an egg, a creamy-white egg, very round, about the size of a pheasant's, and daubed boldly with red. The birds themselves looked absurdly amazed, but that was only because their solitary previous experience of such an egg was from the inside only, and eggs look different from that point of view, no doubt.

"Kee-ark," said my lady, and promptly sat down, with an enormous show of caution, as if she were about to cover a live coal, on that treasure.

She evidently meant to be one of those that start sitting on their first egg at once, which was contrary to the usual tribal habit, and one affected only by a few individuals.

"Krark!" said my lord, and went to sleep.

After all, though eggs or the stars fall, one must sleep, and, besides, he knew what was coming.

It came—with the gold and red and yellow and pink of a perfect sunrise—an imperious demand from within the cave to be fed.

My lord sat in the warm glow, carefully preening his feathers, and took not the slightest notice; but his wonderful eyes flashed out over the fretting waves and along the fretted cliff; and he scratched his black head with one yellow toe.

Then he fell from the cave quite suddenly, so suddenly that every feathered watcher—and there were hundreds—jumped. In a flash he had recovered himself and was gone—over the cliff. When he returned, which was within a short half-hour, a young rabbit returned with him.

On April nineteenth appeared the second egg, and on the twenty-second the third and last was laid. Though all of them had the same coloring, no two were precisely alike. Moreover, they were placed by my

lady exactly one inch apart, neither more nor less, and in the form of a triangle.

No peregrine, by the way, allows her eggs to touch, like other birds' eggs, if she can help it. It is a habit, but if any man knows the reason of that habit, he has not given it to the world. It may or may not have a reason. Most things in Nature have, however.

From that point their troubles began.

My lord hunted alone, as he always did, but he hunted for two now, and instead of consuming the kill on the spot, as in the free and riotous days of old, he had to carry it home. Therefore, he slew with discretion. Occasionally he took a turn with the eggs himself; but it can not be said that he liked the awful, slow, patient process known as setting.

On the first day he had bad luck. Flinging himself from the aerie with that extraordinary dash that characterized him, he gave chase to a party of jackdaws. They are low and common people of a vulgar tongue, and they know much more than is good for them. This is proved by the fact that they flew at once to the ravens' nest a quarter of a mile along the cliff, and that is why the peregrine, winnowing impetuously in hot pursuit, found himself so placed that he could not safely ignore a vast, black shadow above him and another on his right flank. They were ravens, and the raven is the peregrine's pet enemy.

Now, the falcon knew what all the rest of the wild knows, and that is that he who falls out with the raven at nesting-time is a fool. He may be clumsy, and he is slow, but the bird does not fly by wings that ever got the better of a raven in the long run.

Had it been two months earlier, the peregrine would have smitten a jackdaw under the very shadow of the raven's wings, if need be, and left the luckless one to flounder out the last of its life in the sea below. Also, he would have so hounded and encircled any raven that dare molest him—though that is a rash act for any bird to do—that the black one would have been glad to flee with his life—or stay where he was and lose it.

Now, however, he was smitten with the pardonable cowardice of a husband and a father—a terrible fear which may attack the bravest; and, after all, his business was to seek meat, and not to brawl with half the low-caste birds of the cliff-side. Therefore,

he removed like the magician who got from place to place by merely wishing he could, only in this case the almost instantaneous shifting from point to point of the horizon was accomplished with real wings—a much greater miracle.

Thus he found himself over the moors five miles away, where he found also a redshank; and he gave chase, and in so doing made a silly blunder.

Now, the redshank—a plover, red as to beak and legs, and of middle size—is alone among birds that are good to eat, inasmuch as it is increasing in numbers, and that means cunning of high degree.

This redshank invited himself into the clouds, upon spying my lord, just one degree less quickly than my lord followed after. When, however, the falcon was half-way up, going at not less than seventy miles an hour, the redshank whizzed past him, coming down again.

This was a change of tactics quite bewildering in its suddenness, and before the falcon quite realized the real meaning of it, the redshank was speeding away, away into the distance, with a long-drawn and derisive cry of "Työp! työp!" Moreover, he was hugging the ground, and continued so to hug it, flying only a foot or two above the young grass, till he was out of sight of the dread enemy, for well he knew that no peregrine can launch on his death-dealing "stoop" at a bird flying close to land, lest he dash himself to pieces before he can check his terrific momentum.

My lord turned with a furious scream, short and sharp, that may be written, "Kek-kek!" and winnowed away to have another try.

The eyes of all birds of prey are a marvel, and it was because of this that he spotted the wild duck—the mallard drake—who, returning from some bachelor revels, was weaving circles of observation on high before risking his green neck down among the rushes where his wife kept house.

That drake came down to the rushes, that is true, but not as he expected—much faster than was proper in any bird, and turning head over heels as he fell, in fact. The peregrine had descended out of the infinite, descended in a hissing streak, and, striking the luckless duck with the spur on the back of his right foot, had switched off his life as one snaps out an electric light.



THUS he lived, this prince among birds of prey, for five days, unmolested, killing to live, and once—that was the fifth day, and the debt was paid a few hours later—slaying for sport.

Now it is written among the laws of the wild folk that no beast or bird shall kill for pure sport after the fashion of men, save only the weasel tribe. To break this law brings dire calamity to the breaker.

My lord, tumbling headlong from his cave, struck a luckless puffin out of pure devilry, caught it ere it reached the water, carried it a little way, and, because it struggled and fought feebly, dropped it to the ever-following rollers beneath. Then, without even so much as turning this head, he vanished over the cliff-face, to hunt for golden plover.

And that evening, on his return, he found calamity already waiting for him.

It was his custom to announce his home-coming in a long-drawn, whining scream, thus, "Kee-ark;" to drop a sheer thousand feet to the eye of the cave, to climb again like an animated corkscrew to a vast altitude, and repeat the maneuver twice or thrice.

On this evening, however, he checked his first dive in the middle, and swept aside with simitar pinions, backing air frantically, and the scream died half-uttered upon his blue-black, hooked bill.

His mate was poised head to wind; for it was off-shore, about half-a-mile out to sea. She hung on scarcely-moving wings at no great height, and facing the cave, and she was saying nothing, and continued, save once, to say nothing throughout all that which followed.

There was something oddly weird and almost uncanny in the grim and terrible silent motionlessness of this great bird of prey, hanging alone in all that vast red desolation—for the sun was setting—of sea and sky.

A man was in the cave.

My lord, swinging up and down on a mile-long course above his mate, saw that much. His ringing, angry scream beat to and fro: "Krark, krark, krark!" And his mate, half-turning her head, replied with, first, the peculiar, doleful, "Kee-ark!" and then the full-throated, harsh cry of the alarmed hen peregrine, "Kwark." And that, from first to last, was the only sound she uttered.

After a certain time—it was minutes

really, but it seemed hours to the watching birds—the man came out.

The peregrines had entirely overlooked the fact, the absolutely vital fact, that the huge, poised boulder which half-hid the mouth of the cave, hid also a way, passable to an agile man, of reaching the cave from the cliff-top. The man came out, as has been said, and, climbing by that way, departed to a heaped-up mass of gorse. He did not come out again, and the fact was duly noticed by my lord.

My lady, full of that fierce impatience which is the special affliction of mothers, returned to the aerie in one dark streak, my lord hurled himself to and fro in the air.

It is said among the wild folk that when men crouch still, death is afoot. My lord was, therefore, ill at ease. What, he would like to know, was that man lying up for, after the manner of the wild cat, who lived in a wood hard by?

It was his sudden, warning scream, uttered a minute later, as he flashed past the mouth of the cave, which caused my lady to flutter out, for the second time, in an odd, disconcerted manner that was surprisingly mean for such a fier.

She flashed a piercing glance back over the cliff as she beat seaward. Men were coming along its edge. Oh, horrors! More men! They came, they stopped above the cave—any one might have known, by the feathers scattered all-whither on the turf, who resided below; they talked. And the man in the gorse made no sign.

Anon, with a great untwirling of ropes and much ludicrous caution, one man descended to the aerie. What he did therein none knew, but when he returned again to his fellow-fiend, the birds saw him holding out their three eggs—all heaven could not have paid for them in the falcons' eyes—and could hear him utter that hollow cackle, which was, as they knew, the custom among men when pleased.

Then the men departed swiftly, still cackling, over the brow of the hill, and, scarcely had the last grinning head vanished when he from the gorse-clump appeared. It took him seven minutes exactly to climb down to the aerie and back again.


This man was even more mad than the rest. He cackled much worse than they did. He even lay down on the cliff-top and cackled like half a dozen hens, to the grievous risk of his life, for he rolled about and

cackled. Then suddenly he departed, too.

And deep peace came down upon that cove, and the sea-birds, the ravens, the crows, the kestrels, and the pigeons came in again to their homes. The falcons alone were silent. In fact, it was nearly dark before at last they conquered their terror and came in.

My lady slid down to the aerie first, my lord still weaving anxious mazes against the sky. Suddenly her piercing scream rent the silence—a scream bursting with joy—whereupon my lord tumbled out of the heavens as if he had been shot, dived into the hole like a salmon going under, stood as still as death for thirty-seven seconds, and glared fixedly under his scowling brows as one who beholds a miracle.

The eggs were there, all three of them intact, uncracked, and all correct, even to position. But neither he nor his mate ever knew how it had been done, this magic.

 "YOU see," said the naturalist to his wife two months later, "I had watched them so long, from pairing onward—always through binoculars, of course—that I felt in a way responsible for them. Therefore, when I heard two collectors' agents discussing plans, in the hotel coffee-room, for robbing the nest on the following day, I felt justified in mixing for these gentlemen a little salad. I obtained three of the roundest pheasants' eggs I could get from Lord Lincairn's head keeper, colored them as nearly as possible to re-

semble the peregrines' eggs, placed them in the aerie just before the men turned up next day, and lay up in a gorse patch to watch, with the real eggs safe by me. Oh, it was a great robbing!

"You should have seen how they laughed, because they had evaded the law and stolen peregrines' eggs. Ho, ho, ho! But when they had gone, and I had replaced the real eggs in the aerie, I laughed till I cried, and almost fell over the cliff. And somewhere in England is a collector who certainly paid a high price for, and will show you, no doubt, with pride, a complete clutch of British-taken pheasants' eggs, doing duty as the eggs of a peregrine. At least, that is, if the paint hasn't rubbed off by now."

"And what happened after that?" asked his wife.

"Oh, the first egg hatched out into a downy, swearing, white fiend of a son of the House of Peregrine on May fourteenth, and the last five days later."

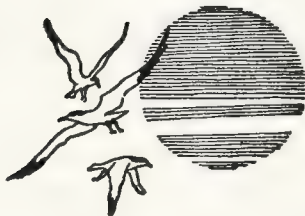
"And after that?" persisted the lady.

"Ah!" said the naturalist, turning to go out, "that is another story."



EXTRACT from official catalogue of sale by auction of Ornithological Collection, the property of the late L. W. A. Hambold, Esq:

Lot I.—Clutch of three English Peregrine Falcon eggs. Complete and perfect condition. (These eggs are unique, being of a type hitherto unknown among collectors. They were much valued by their late owner for this reason.)





Author of "Two Fools," "The Man for the Job," etc.

TOMMY DOWNS, third mate of the freighter *Hawk*, was not a drinking man—that is, not an inveterate drinker—but he had met a man who seemed willing to buy him all the liquor he could drink; and Tommy Downs was not the man to refuse something for nothing. He was American born, but somewhere in his ancestry was a strong strain of Scotch. His age was thirty years; and just half of that thirty years had been spent at sea. He was long and lean, and as a rule rather mournful of countenance; now, however, as he sat in a West Street "restaurant" staring across the table at Myer, the fat man, Tommy's eyes sparkled and his face was animated. He had never liked Myer until now, and now he was censuring himself for having misjudged him.

Myer was explaining something, and Tommy was nodding agreement; but he was not at all certain that he knew what the fat man was talking about.

"I don't think I get you," said Tommy at length. "Go over that again, will you?"

"Certainly," said Myer genially, and he handed Tommy a cigar and held a match for him. "This Panamanian peso—" and he placed a pudgy forefinger on a silver coin that lay on the table between them—"is worth fifty cents, face value, as currency; but as bullion—that is, melted up—it is worth eighty-seven cents at present market quotations, because there is eighty-seven cents' worth of silver in it."

"I've spent a lot of those things," said Tommy, "but I never knew that."

"No? Well, it's true. And you see what it means. You can make a profit of seventy-four per cent. merely by converting Panamanian pesos into silver bullion. Simplest, easiest and most profitable game I know of. Of course you would need some money to begin with, to make it worth while, but not a great deal."

"But I haven't got any—not a nickel to spare."

"That's all right. That's why I suggest we go partners. You make regular trips to Panama; all you need do is bring up a load of silver coin each trip. I'll put up the money and pay you five hundred dollars a trip."

"Is it against the law?"

"No. Gold and silver coin is on the free list—there's no duty."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive. But don't take my word for it; call up the Custom House, or ask the inspector on the pier when you go back to the ship. I tell you this game is easy, profitable and within the law! Have another drink."

Myer beckoned a waiter: the glasses were filled and emptied.

"I'd sure like to make that five hundred bucks," said Tommy thoughtfully, wiping his lips. "That would be over three months' pay for me."

"You agree then? You see how easy it'll be—"

"That's just it; it seems *too* easy. Seems like there must be a nigger in the wood-pile somewhere."

"There isn't, I tell you."

"Well, anyway, I'm leary," said Tommy, shaking his head.

Myer sat back and studied Tommy thoughtfully through the smoke of his cigar.

"I guess I'd better start back to the ship," said Tommy at length, starting to rise from his chair.

"You'd better have another drink," said Myer. "It's cold out tonight."

"Well—one more. Thanks."

"Suppose we say a thousand instead of five hundred," suggested Myer when the glasses were again filled.

"A thousand!"

"Yes; a thousand dollars a trip, spot cash on delivery of the coin on the pier. I'll have a machine there to take it away. A thousand dollars."

Tommy downed his drink and sat thinking of all he could buy with a thousand dollars. He could buy a new sextant, for instance; the one he had was full of errors, and the markings on the arc were so worn that he could barely make them out. He could buy a new oilskin coat; his old one was beginning to leak at the seams; and new boots, and a new sou'wester; and he could get a pair of German 8-power binoculars, real prism glasses, the kind he had always wanted. There were a lot of things a fellow could buy with a thousand dollars.

"A thousand dollars," repeated Myer.

"And how did you say you would work it?"

"Now you're talking! In Porto Bello there's a fellow I know, a Chinaman, who runs a Chinese lottery game. His name is Wa Fong, and he and I have done business before. Here's how we work it. I cable Fong seventy-two hundred dollars. He buys six thousand dollars' worth of Panamanian silver—twelve thousand pesos. The remaining twelve hundred dollars is Fong's commission—ten cents on a peso. It's worth it, you see, because the silver is not so easy to get. You get the silver from Fong and bring it to me in New York. I make twenty-two hundred, Fong makes twelve hundred, and you make a thousand; and nobody is the loser! We don't rob anybody—see?"

Tommy nodded solemnly.

"Ishee," he said, fumbling awkwardly with his glass.

"Have another drink," said Myer, smiling knowingly.

"Yesh—one more," said Tommy.

The waiter filled Tommy's glass, but Myer placed his hand over his own and shook his head.

"Now there's another little thing," he said when the waiter was gone. "I've got a scheme that will prevent any double-crossing between you and me. Now understand me; I don't doubt your honesty. But to be frank with you, I wouldn't trust you or anybody else. I'm a business man—see?—and it's not good business to trust. You know that. Besides, I've got an idea that beats trust a mile. I've made the same agreement with other mates, and it always works."

"Lesh 'ear it."

"Righto! I've been in the smuggling game for years—see? I've smuggled, or had others smuggle for me, everything from diamonds to aigrets to peddle to the chorus girls on Broadway. I had a man carrying silver for me, but he got fired for some reason or other, and as you happen to be the only other man I know in the Panama trade, I come to you. First, what grade mate's license have you got?"

"Second mate, any tonnage, any oceans."

"Right. You know that it's against the law for you to give that license to anybody, don't you?"

"Yeah, I know."

"You know that you would probably go to jail if it became known that you did give it to somebody?"

"Sure."

"Righto! You give me your license—see?—and a written statement saying that you gave it to me of your own free-will, that I did not steal it, and if you double-cross me I'll simply mail your license and the statement to the Board of Steamboat Inspectors."

"Nothin' doin'. I ain't crazy! Why—why, now——"

"Wait a minute, wait a minute."

Myer cast aside his genial manner and became more aggressive.

"I know that a mate can't sail without a license, but in your case it's different. Your license has always been posted in the chart-room, hasn't it? Well then, the captain has seen it, and he knows that you are a licensed mate. Besides, he may never notice that it's missing. Who is your captain anyway?"

"McGuire—they call 'im 'One-Two Mac.' The toughest guy you ever heard of. If 'e

should find out I gave my ticket 'way—good night!"

"But he won't find it out. If he should happen to notice that it's missing from the board, just tell him that it blew out of the chart-room and over the side. Tell him anything you want to—it doesn't matter much what you tell him. Then when you get back to New York, you can go to the license commission, tell them your ticket was destroyed and have them make you out a certificate of lost license, which, as you know, is as good as an original. If you decide at any time that you don't want to do any more business with me I'll give you back your license and the statement. You tear them up. I simply want something to——"

"You just want a hammer to hol' over my head."

"Well—you can call it that. You'll have nothing to worry about. I'm not going to sacrifice six thousand dollars just for the fun of sending you to jail. The license will be just as safe with me as it would be with you. I just want to know that you'll deliver six thousand dollars' worth of silver to me without trying to double-cross me. That's business. Here—I'll make out the statement and you can sign it. Then I'll walk to the ship with you and you can go aboard and get the license."

"Nothin' doin', I said. Put your paper back in your pocket; d'you hear? Nothin' doin'."

Tommy picked up his glass to drink, but it slipped from his fingers and fell to the floor. He ground it to pieces beneath his heel.

"You need another drink," said Myer, watching Tommy from beneath lowered lids.

"Yesh—one more," said Tommy.

Myer spread a sheet of paper on the table and reached for his fountain pen.



TOMMY DOWNS awoke with the realization that for some time he had been listening half-consciously to an insistent knocking upon his door. He opened his eyes and sat up slowly in his bunk and growled:

"Who's there? And what d'you want?"

"It's the quartermaster, sir, and I thought you'd want to get up. It's nearly eight o'clock."

"Night or day?" asked Tommy, feeling

tenderly of his scorched and burning throat.

"Morning, sir. I've called you four times since six o'clock."

"Oh!" said Tommy. "Eight in the morning, eh?"

"Yes, sir. It's almost time to wind the chronometers, and I thought——"

"Yes—that's right. Glad you called me."

"And I've got a letter here for you, Mr. Downs. A big fat man left it with the quartermaster on watch at midnight and told him to pass it along to you in the morning."

"Yeah? Well, give it here."

The quartermaster opened the door and handed Tommy the letter.

For some minutes Tommy Downs sat in his berth with his head buried in his arms. There was a dull buzzing in his head; there was a thick, gummy something in his mouth; his throat was dry and parched.

"——! What a morning after!" he exclaimed. "That's the first time I've been drunk in years. And where the —— was I last night anyway? I only had a dollar when I went ashore to get something to eat, and yet I got drunk. Seems like— Oh, yes; I remember meeting Myer, and then we went into Tony Acosta's. Let's see, now——"

Slowly and painfully he pieced together his and Myer's conversation up to the point where the fat man was trying to induce him to sign something, and then he could remember no more.

"And what did I do then?" he asked himself. "And what the —— is this letter about?"

He tore open the letter and was about to read it when the quartermaster's voice again called from beyond the door—

"Five minutes of eight, sir."

Tommy slid from his bunk and found that with the exception of shoes and coat he was fully dressed. He put the letter in his pocket and slipped on his shoes; then he left his room and went forward to the chart-room, on the same deck. He waited till eight bells struck and wound the two chronometers; then he took the letter from his pocket and read:

Downs:

You'll find Wa Fung's place on Avenida Central, near the Plaza. I'll write him so that you'll have no trouble identifying yourself.

Don't worry about your mate's ticket—it's in a safe place.

Yours,
MYER.

That was all.

"My ——!" exclaimed Tommy. "My ——! Now I remember! Holy sailor, what have I done!"

It was all clear now; he remembered everything. What was to be done? He had so little time! The *Hawk* was to sail at noon, in four hours; and Tommy would be on watch from now until the *Hawk* would be far down the harbor.

Now he remembered signing the agreement in Tony Acosta's place, returning to the ship, fumbling about in the dark chart-room, taking his license from the license board and taking it to Myer, waiting on the pier.

He glanced fearfully up at the glass-doored board, fastened to the wall of the chart-room above the chronometers. Yes, there was one certificate missing; there were now but three in the board where there should be four! He turned his back on the board and clutched a handful of hair as if he would tear it out by the roots.

"Cooked!" he exclaimed. "Cooked to a frazzle! Oh, for ten minutes alone with Myer! The dirty, oily-mouthed hound!"

And he cursed the fat man with the "Wanderer's Curse"—

"——'s bells ring at his burying!"

As in a daze he went about the business of preparing the vessel for sea—testing whistle, steering-gear, running-lights and engine-room telegraph; seeing that the hatches were properly battened down and all ports securely closed. He avoided the chart-room as much as possible; but when he was compelled to go there he found his eyes straying constantly to the license board, whereas for months past he had not once thought of the board or given it a conscious look.

Soon the chief mate came aboard, and then the second mate, and then the captain, the black-haired, black-eyed, dour little fighting man whom they called One-Two Mac.

"What's the matter, mister?" asked Captain Mac of Tommy. "You look sick—and worried."

"I—I don't feel well, Cap'n Mac," said Tommy; and he retreated hastily from the master's speculating look.

Tommy's worry and nervousness began to bear fruit as the *Hawk* let go the pier and backed out of the slip at noon. The third mate's position when entering or leaving port is on the navigating-bridge with the master; and Tommy's first mis-

take was signaling, "Slow ahead" to the engine-room when the captain had told him, "Slow astern."

"Here!" barked Captain Mac after the third incident. "Get off the bridge! Tell one of the *mates* to take your watch! You're not drunk, and I don't believe you're sick, you're just dumb!"

"Yes, sir," answered Tommy meekly; and he hurried off in search of the second mate.

"Gosh, I'll have to pull myself together," Tommy told himself; and he did outwardly, although inwardly he was in constant fear that some one would notice the license board and come to him with the question—

"Where is your license?"

But no one did; and as the *Hawk* steamed south, made Haiti and Cristobal, Tommy began to feel more at ease. Two days in Cristobal, and the ship was headed eastward toward Porto Bello; and Tommy, though not so fearful of detection, was still undecided what he should do.

"Something tells me to steer clear of silver," he said. "This scheme of Myer's is too easy. I know darn well there's a catch in it somewhere. But if I don't show up in New York with a load of coin Myer mails my certificate to the Custom House and I go to jail!"



ON THE afternoon of the *Hawk's* arrival in Porto Bello Tommy, dressed in his shore clothes, went ashore. He climbed in a cab at the pier entrance and told the driver to take him to Wa Fung's, on Avenida Central near the Plaza.

Wa Fung's proved to be a curio store. It was an up-to-date store, and neat and clean.

"English spoken," read a sign in the window.

Tommy entered rather reluctantly, still not quite decided whether or not to go through with it. A short, heavily built Chinaman, dressed in stiffly starched white duck, came from the rear of the store and waited silently for Tommy to state his wants.

"Wa Fung?" asked Tommy.

The Chinaman nodded.

"Did you get a letter from Myer, in New York?"

Again Wa Fung nodded.

"Well, I'm Downs, third mate in the *Hawk*."

Wa Fung looked Tommy over, evidently comparing his appearance with the description he had received in the letter. Then he nodded again shortly, as if satisfied, and went to the door. He looked casually up and down the street, then came back and beckoned Tommy toward a rear room. Tommy followed him into what was evidently an office.

"They were hard to get this time," said Wa Fung smoothly, "but I got them; twelve thousand silver pesos. When you return to New York, tell Mr. Myer that I think it would be better to import gold dollars next time. They are easier to get at present, and they are just as profitable. Silver is becoming scarce. Now how are you going to get this silver to your vessel?"

"Carry it, of course," said Tommy. "Make a bundle out of it, or put it in some kind of a sack. Come on, now; gimme the — stuff and let me get going!"

Wa Fung's brows lifted in surprise; and then he smiled faintly.

"My friend," he said softly, "twelve thousand silver pesos weigh seven hundred pounds, or perhaps eight hundred."

"Huh?"

"Between seven and eight hundred pounds."

"Holy sailor! Why, I'll have to get a truck and a gang of men!"

Wa Fung stood for a moment, his eyes half-closed and his lips pursed, thinking; then, looking at Tommy, he said—

"When you reach New York you can have your sailors carry it openly off the ship; but now—it's different."

"What d'you mean, different?" asked Tommy.

"What time will you be on watch tonight?" asked Wa Fung, not answering his question.

"From eight to twelve."

"Ah! Then all you need do is be at the gangway at eleven-thirty. I will see that the silver is put safely aboard your vessel. It will be well if there is no one but yourself near the gangway when my men bring it aboard. You would not sleep comfortable if you knew that the crew knew that you had twelve thousand silver pesos in your room. You need not worry about anything else. Remember—eleven-thirty tonight."

Tommy returned to the *Hawk* and spent the remainder of the day walking about the

decks with a distracted look in his eye. He felt that something very unpleasant was about to happen to him.

"It's too easy, too easy!" he said. "I know darn well that there's a nigger in the woodpile!"

Once as he passed the captain's door the little shipmaster shouted out at him:

"Here! What the — are you parading up and down in front of my door for? You get on my nerves! What's the idea?"

"Nothing, sir—nothing! I was just—just walkin'," stammered Tommy.

"Well, just walk somewhere else then!"

"Yes, sir—all right, cap'n;" and Tommy went hurriedly down the bridge ladder to the main deck, where he could do his walking in peace.

"What's wrong with you?" asked Mr. Scott, the second mate, who had been standing at the foot of the ladder. "Why didn't you come back at the old man like you usually do? You know he barks more than he bites, and he likes to know a mate's got spunk enough to stand up for himself."

"I know it," said Tommy. "I know it. But I—I don't feel right."

"Humph! You don't look right either, if you ask me," said Scott.

After dinner Tommy went aft and sat down alone, while the red sun went down behind the hills. Rain spattered for a while on the awning over his head and then passed over; and then came the sea breeze, cool and fresh. The sun went out behind the hills like a candle that is plunged in the sea, and it was suddenly night. A black-and-white gannet swooped down and perched on the rail and stared at him; but Tommy saw nothing, heard nothing; he was thinking deeply; and always one thought was paramount:

"Gosh! I'd sure hate to go to jail!"

One bell rang—quarter of eight—and Tommy walked forward to take over the watch, merely a formality in port, from Mr. Tenny, the chief mate.

"I got 'er," said Tommy.

"She's all yours, mister," said Tenny, nodding; and he went off toward the bridge.

The time dragged slowly; and the later it got the slower it seemed to drag; but at last six bells—eleven o'clock—rang out, and Tommy stationed himself near the head of the gangway. The quartermaster stood near by. On the pier, near the foot

of the gangway, a Panamanian customs inspector lounged in a canvas-bottomed chair.

Eleven twenty-five, by Tommy's watch, and he could see the lights of a motor car coming along the road from the town. The car stopped at the pier entrance, and a man alighted and walked out upon the pier. The stranger, his hat low over his eyes and his head down, stepped up to the customs inspector and spoke softly. The customs man murmured something in answer, then went to the end of the pier and stood gazing out over the shadowy waters of the bay.

"Quartermaster," said Tommy.

"Yes, sir."

"Go aft and make sure the stern light is burning."

"Yes, sir."

"And if you want, you can have a cup of coffee and a smoke while you're gone. I'll look after things for a while."

"Yes, sir. Thank you," and the quartermaster went aft, leaving Tommy alone by the gangway.

Tommy turned back to the gangway and waited.

"What did they send that customs man away for?" thought Tommy. "Now I know there's something wrong! I go to jail if I don't; and maybe I go to jail if I do! — Myer!"

Four men came from the automobile, walking slowly and evidently carrying some heavy object between them. As they came closer Tommy saw that the object was a strongly built wooden box, about two feet long and one foot wide and one foot deep, fitted with four stout handles, one at each end and one at each side. The four men, negroes, were straining as if the box was very heavy, and twice they paused to rest. With them came the man who had spoken to the customs inspector, and as he came nearer Tommy recognized him as Wa Fung.

The men struggled up the gangway with their burden, and Wa Fung spoke to Tommy—

"Which way?"

Tommy led the way aft, up a ladder to the boat deck and then forward again, so that they came to his room without going upon the bridge or passing the master's room. The four blacks were blowing when they finally eased the box to the floor and straightened their backs.

Tommy signed the receipt that Wa

Fung spread on the desk for him; and the Chinaman and his four men went silently away.

Tommy looked at the box. He tested its weight by grasping one of the handles and lifting.

"I'll say it's heavy!" he said. "Well—so far, so good. I wish I was in New York, though, and my license was back on the board, where it belongs."



"YOU look more human than you've been looking for the last week or so," said Captain Mac to Tommy the next afternoon.

"I feel better, cap'n," said Tommy; and then after a pause, "A third mate ain't supposed to be human anyway."

"And few of them are, it seems to me. Why don't you quit?"

"For the same reason the company don't pay me what I'm worth—can't afford it."

"Humph!" snorted Captain Mac.

Captain Mac knew Tommy was himself now. He liked the third mate and liked to hear him grumble. A quarter of a century at sea had taught the little master that the fault-finding seafarer is usually a good seaman and a faithful one; that his grumbling is never to be taken seriously. A sea adage says, "It's a sailor's right to growl;" and growling is to seamen a sort of diversion. A seaman who doesn't grumble isn't a seaman, they say; he's a piece of gear, or a spare pump-handle.

"Yes, I feel better," said Tommy. "Much better!"

"See if you can't show a little intelligence then, when we sail at midnight."

The captain started to turn away, then paused and said:

"By the way, mister, the ship will be searched before we leave. The native police will be aboard on your watch to search for silver. I'll probably be ashore when they come, and I want you to—What's the matter?"

"I— Nothin', sir," said Tommy, trying hard to recover his composure.

"Well, I was going to say that I want you to assist the police all you can. Don't antagonize them, or they'll cause us trouble. They heard a rumor that the customs man at the gangway was bribed last night and that he allowed some one to bring silver aboard. Perhaps so, perhaps not; anyway help them all you can. And

this news is to go no further than the officers. Understand?"

"Yes, sir. When did you say they would be aboard?"

"On your watch—about ten o'clock, I think."

"I'll—look out for them, cap'n," said Tommy; and he went to his room—to think.

"I knew it; I knew it!" he moaned. "It's not against the law to bring silver coin into the States, but it's against the law to take it out of Panama! Myer, you dirty crook, you cooked me proper! May the seven hungry hounds of — chase your soul across the prairies of — forever!"

He swore; he raged at the box of silver in the corner of his room; he kicked savagely at it, and then sat down upon it and tried to think. He couldn't think; prison gates clanged and drowned out his thoughts.

"I'll have to do something," he said. "I can't let them find the stuff in my room—even if I have to heave it over the side."

And then like a flash it came to him—"heave it over the side."

He went below to the officers' mess-room and ate dinner, then returned to his room, where he sat waiting patiently for darkness. The longshoremen loading the *Hawk* stopped work for the day; and Tommy saw the captain, and later the second mate, go ashore. Soon it was dark, and he prepared for what he had to do.

First he cut ten fathoms of 21-thread manila rope from a coil in the signal locker on the bridge and brought it to his room. Then he set to work to move the case of silver to the door. It was hard work; but he persisted, dragging it inch by inch across the floor, and soon he had the box in such a position that he could, by exerting all his strength, raise one end to the low, brass-covered door-sill.

He placed two deck-scrubber handles on the deck outside the sill and slid the box over the sill and allowed it to rest on the handles. Using the handles as rollers, he worked the box toward the rail, shifting each roller in turn as the box passed over it.

The rail on this deck was merely three parallel bars, the lowest one being about fourteen inches above the waterway; and Tommy knew that he would have little trouble getting the box over the side.

He passed his manila line completely around the box and through the handles to keep it from slipping; then he took a turn

with the line about a stanchion, tilted the box over the side and slowly lowered away until he saw that the box was out of sight beneath the surface of the water. He made the line fast and stood up, on his face a look of satisfaction.

At a dozen or more places along the side of the ship there were lines hanging over, some holding cork fenders and some stages which the crew had used in painting the ship's water-line, so that the line holding the box of silver was but one of many, and apparently no different from the others.

He told himself that he would haul the box of silver aboard again as soon as the police were through their search.

"All I'll need is a little time, darkness and a 4-purchase tackle," he said.

He got the tackle from the signal locker and placed it where it would be handy. A 4-purchase tackle multiplies a man's strength by four, minus a small percentage for friction; and Tommy did not believe he would have any trouble hoisting the box and swinging it aboard.

An hour passed, and another, and another.

"Gosh!" said Tommy. "Eleven o'clock and no police. If they don't come soon I'll not have time to get that — box up before we sail."

At that moment the native policemen, four of them, came tramping up the gangway. One of them, a *sargento* by the chevrons on his sleeve, held out a paper; but Tommy waved it aside.

"All right, sergeant," he said; "I know what you want to do. Go to it now, and hurry; we're to sail in half an hour."

But the *policia* would not hurry; not they; they had plenty of time, they assured Tommy, and besides the law of the land was not a thing to be hurried by the third mate of a fly-by-night tramp steamer. Very leisurely they went about the business of searching the vessel; and they stopped often to discuss the possibility of that which they were looking for being in such-and-such a place, or of its not being there.

They searched the officers' rooms first, then the bridge and chart-room; then they started forward on the main deck and slowly worked their way aft. Then they wandered through the sailors' and firemen's fore-castles, the passageways, the engine-room and fireroom; and one of them, armed with an electric flashlight, ventured for a short distance into the bunkers.

It was a big job, they said, this searching of a ship; but if they could not finish to-night, surely they could finish *mañana*; and while they were considering the matter, eight bells sounded dully in the engine-room.

Tommy groaned.

"All right, gents," he said; "take your time. There's no hurry *now*," and to himself, "Cooked again!"

He left them and went on deck, where the boatswain and his men were covering the hatches and pulling in from over the side the stages and fenders.

Tommy waited by the line holding his box of silver, and when the boatswain approached, waved him away.

"Don't bother this one, bouse," he said. "Leave it over a while. I'll take care of it."

"Yes, sir," said the boatswain, a red-faced little cockney; but he raised his eyebrows and looked curiously at Tommy and at the line; then he shrugged and went on with his work.

Tommy hovered nervously about the rail. What should he do? He knew now that he would not have time to get the silver inboard between the departure of the police and the time when he would be expected on the bridge; for it was certain that the *Hawk* would sail immediately the search was ended. If he attempted to get it aboard now there was the possibility that the searchers would catch him in the act; and if he waited till they were gone, the ship would pull out from the pier with the box still hanging over the side in the water.

"And the line will part, and the silver will go to the bottom, and my certificate will go to the Custom House, and I'll go to jail," mused Tommy. "It looks like it's goin' to be a hard Winter!"

One o'clock, two o'clock, and the four policemen stalked majestically down the gangway, pronouncing the *Hawk* clear of all suspicion and free to leave port at any time her commander desired. There had been a mistake: there was no Panamanian silver aboard the vessel; and the Porto Bello police asked the forgiveness of all concerned.

"I hope you choke!" growled Tommy under his breath.

He made his way toward the bridge as the boatswain was calling his men to take in the gangway.

Captain Mac was standing alone in the wing of the bridge.

"Steering gear, mister?" he asked.

"Tested and O.K., sir," answered Tommy.

"Whistle?"

"O.K., sir."

"Running-lights?"

"Burning brightly, sir."

"Telegraph?"

"Burning brightly, sir."

"What!" barked Captain Mac, staring.

"Er—sir?"

"Did you test the engine-room telegraph, and is it all right?"

"Yes, sir—all right, sir."

"Wake up, — it; wake up!"

Little One-Two Mac faced forward and shouted to the mate on the forecastle head, "Let go, for'rd!" and facing aft, "Let go, aft!"

He turned to Tommy and said, slowly and distinctly:

"Slow astern, mister—*astern*, now; not ahead or sidewise—*astern*! And *slow*!"

"Slow astern it is, sir," said Tommy; and he very carefully put the indicator on "slow *ahead*."

Captain Mac leaped toward him; but Tommy, sensing instantly that something was wrong, continued the motion of the indicator as if he were merely giving it an extra ring, and left it on "slow astern."

"My—!" exclaimed the master. "What the—*is* on your mind?"

Tommy did not answer: his thoughts were elsewhere.

The second-mate came from aft to stand his watch, the eight-to-twelve, on the bridge, thus relieving Tommy. The chief mate would remain on the forecastle head until the ship was clear of the channel.

The *Hawk* by now was clear of the pier and had hauled about to go down the channel and into the Caribbean. She went slowly ahead—slowly because the channel at Porto Bello is narrow and difficult to follow, particularly so at night.

"I noticed something hanging over the side," remarked the second mate, glancing into the compass. "I didn't stop to get it up."

"Why wasn't it taken in before?" demanded Captain Mac. "What's wrong with you people? Where's the bosun? Get him to take in that—"

"I'll look after it, cap'n," said Tommy

quickly. "You needn't call the bosun; I'll get it in."

"Hurry then before it gets in the propeller!"

Tommy ran to where his case of silver hung over the ship's side. It was dark there, and a wooden partition, built thwartship to protect the officers' quarters from the heat and dust of the fire-room fiddley, screened him from the bridge. He put a rolling hitch on the line as far down as he could reach, hooked in the lower block of his tackle, hooked the upper block to the top of a stanchion, and began to heave.

The tackle came taut, then stopped. He threw all his wiry strength on it; but not an inch did he gain. He struggled, he sweated, he swore: The box of silver resisted his mightiest efforts. The vessel was going ahead; the line led down and aft at an angle: the resistance of the water on the surface of the box with the ship going ahead, added to the weight of the silver, was too great for Tommy to overcome with his tackle. Soon the ship would be sent ahead faster and the resistance of the water would increase; then the slender manila line would part and the silver would be gone forever.

Three firemen, Chileans, came from the fire-room fiddley. They trimmed the ventilators to the cool night air, opened the engine-room skylight on the weather side and took a last look around before going below to their work.

Tommy was desperate; the case of silver must be got aboard. He turned to the firemen and with an assumed air of casual authority said:

"Here, you fellows, gimme a hand with this! Shake it up, now. The old man is raising — about this box of—stuff bein' over the side."

The firemen came forward, tailed on the hauling-part of the tackle and heaved with a will. The box of silver left the water and came bumping its way up the side.

"Easy—we don't want to smash it up against the side," said Tommy.

Twice he had to pass a stopper on the line and shift the lower block of the tackle; but in less than five minutes the box swung above the rail. A burly fireman grasped one of the brass handles, tilted the box over the rail—and sprang clear as the box crashed to the deck, barely missing his foot.

"—! Ver' heavy!" he exclaimed, staring at the box.

"Sure it is," said Tommy. "Now give me a hand to get it in my room."

They each took hold of a handle; and the case of silver was carried into Tommy's room and placed on the floor in a corner.

"That's all, boys," said Tommy.

He closed the door after them and switched on his light. He sat down slowly and wiped perspiration from his forehead with his sleeve. He gulped and wet his lips with his tongue. He felt sick and weak—and very thankful. He felt the way a man must feel who has received a pardon on the way to his execution.

The three Chilean firemen were still standing outside Tommy's door. One of them held in his hand a shining silver peso.

"*Otro!*" he exclaimed, pointing.

Another peso lay near the rail. They found two more in the waterway.

The three firemen looked at one another. They turned together and stared at the third mate's closed door. They drew closer together. They nodded knowingly and talked in low voices. Their dark eyes flashed; their hard faces grew grim.

They went slowly toward the fiddley, pausing now and then to look over their shoulders at the third mate's door.



THE next evening after dinner Tommy decided to take a look at his silver pieces. He got a screw-driver and when he bent over the case, noticed that the lid was loose—caused probably by the fall of the box from the rail the night before. He took out the screws and lifted the lid.

"Ah!" he murmured.

A layer of coins shone brightly. They were good to look at. He touched them; they were hard and cool. He took up one and turned it over and over in his hand; and he saw that the top layer was separated from what lay beneath by a folded sheet of newspaper. From the top layer several coins were missing.

"Gosh!" he thought. "The chink was sure particular about the way he packed them. 'Paper between every layer! Probably to keep 'em from clicking together.'"

A sound beyond his door caused him to start; and he hurriedly replaced the lid of the case, opened the door and looked out.

A Chilean fireman was lounging near the rail.

"What are you hanging around here for?" demanded Tommy. "Beat it!"

The fireman moved off leisurely, slouching insolently and humming "*La Paloma*" between his teeth.

Tommy closed his door and replaced the screws in the lid of the box.

At eight o'clock he went to the bridge and took over the watch from the chief mate. Captain Mac came from his room a little later, looked closely at Tommy and said—

"What's the course, mister?"

"North 30 East, sir," said Tommy quickly.

The captain nodded.

"Good for you! I guess you're normal tonight. I'm going to take a look around before I turn in."

"Very well, sir. Good-night."

"Good-night," said Captain Mac; and he went down the ladder and walked aft.

There was no moon, but the sky was clear, and the air was cool and pleasant. Tommy felt good. He drank deeply of the tropic air, walked briskly from end to end of the bridge, whistled softly to himself and smiled up at the myriad of stars, white and blue and green and red, that twinkled down upon him. It is a wonderful thing to stand a watch on a ship's bridge on a fine tropic night.

One bell rang, and Tommy, with a pleasant word to the quartermaster at the wheel, glanced into the binnacle. The lookout's gruff hail came from the forecastle head—

"Lights burning brightly, sir!"

Tommy again fell to pacing the bridge and dreaming.

There came a sudden sharp command from the bridge-deck aft of the officers' quarters, then a cry, then the thud of blows and the scuffle of feet.

"Take charge of the bridge, quartermaster!" called Tommy; and he raced aft, passed the officers' quarters and rounded the 'thwartship partition.

Hot Spanish oaths came from the direction of the fiddle-hatch, and Tommy saw as he approached that four men were struggling desperately there. One man, small and slender, backed against a ventilator, was holding off the other three, and him the third mate recognized as Captain Mac.

"Take this one, mister!" snapped the little shipmaster; and he drove his shoulder into the stomach of one of his assailants and sent him spinning toward Tommy.

Tommy lashed out instinctively; and his bony fist, with a hundred and eighty pounds of bone and wiry muscle behind it, smacked solidly against the man's jaw. The man's knees buckled; his body sagged forward; but as he fell he wrapped both arms about Tommy's knees and dragged the third mate to the deck with him. Together, and fighting fiercely, they rolled into the waterway.

The man, whom Tommy now knew to be a fireman, was strong and willing to mix it, and he fought like one who knows the rough-and-tumble style of milling. He was as big as Tommy, and stronger, but not as quick. He fought noisily, grunting as he struck, and using his feet, knees and head as well as fists. He was on top of Tommy and trying to twist about so as to be able to dig his knee in Tommy's neck, a favorite trick of foul fighters.

One of the firemen was staggering drunkenly with his hands to his eyes, as if blinded by a blow, and One-Two Mac was battering the other into submission in a workmanlike manner. Captain Mac's arms were disproportionately long, and his shoulders were deceptively broad; thus, his reach was unusual.

His arms drove in and out like piston-rods, and his sharp knuckles smacked with monotonous regularity against the fireman's face or body. *One-two, one-two, one-two*, went the hands of One-Two Mac; and as he struck, the little man smiled crookedly, sardonically: fighting was one of two things—the other was seamanship—that he excelled in; he asked no odds, nor favors, in either.

Captain Mac worked near the fireman who was on top of Tommy. He clutched him suddenly by the hair and dragged him clear. Tommy bounded to his feet, and he and the fireman were at it toe to toe.

The fireman who had staggered off had disappeared. Captain Mac's opponent was retreating toward the fiddle-hatch. Tommy renewed his efforts to dispose of the man he was fighting with, and found that, fighting in a square stand-up fashion, he had the advantage. The knowledge heartened him; and he grinned and threw himself forward.

He drove his left fist to the fireman's waist; followed it with his right. A wild swing landed on his cheek and slowed him up for an instant; then he shook his head and plunged in with a short drive to the body that sent the fireman back on his heels.

He followed it with a left to the chin and a solid smash to the heart.

The fireman faltered and glanced over his shoulder. He saw that his companions had fled, that he was alone with the third mate and the captain, who was sitting on the hatch, calmly watching the fight. He decided that he had done his best, ran to the fiddley and plunged in; and the two victors could hear his shoes clanging on the iron rungs of the ladder as he scrambled below. Tommy was tired and sore. In the shadow of the fiddley he saw a low box and sat down upon it to rest.

"You licked 'im, mister," said Captain Mac. "I give you credit; he was the toughest of the three."

"But you licked two of them," said Tommy.

Captain Mac smiled.

"Oh, they weren't much," he said.

"What was it about anyway?" asked Tommy.

"I don't know—yet. As I came up the after ladder I saw the three of them struggling with a box of something or other, and when they saw me they tried to hide. They jumped me when I tried to see what they had. I suspect it was silver."

Tommy tried to speak but couldn't; his throat was strangely dry and tight.

"Perhaps the Porto Bello police were right after all," went on the captain. "I wouldn't be surprized."

"Wh—where's the case?" gulped Tommy.

"You're sitting on it."

Tommy sprang to his feet and stared at the case he had been sitting upon. It looked like his case; it was of wood and of the same size and had four brass handles.

"Get a screw-driver," said the captain, "and let's see what's in it."

Tommy hurried to his room, glad of the chance to see whether it was really his case that the firemen had had in their possession.

Yes, it was; there was no case in the room. And the lock on the door was broken, and marks on the paint of the jamb showed where a bar had been inserted to force the lock.

Tommy stared dumbly at the spot where the case had been. He was dazed; failure and prison again confronted him; only a little while since, and he had thought his troubles were over!

Hazily he searched for the screw-driver, found it and brought it to Captain Mac.

The little man took out the screws, shifted the lid to one side and clucked his tongue as the coins glinted dully in the starlight.

"As I thought," he said; and he replaced the cover and drove in the screws.

"Call the lookout and the man below, mister," he said, "and we'll put this where it'll be safe."

Tommy went to the bridge and blew his whistle, and in a few minutes the lookout and his partner came up the ladder. Tommy went with them to where the master stood guarding the box of silver coin.

The four lifted the case and carried it to the bridge. At the captain's order they put it in the signal locker, and the little man snapped the lock and dropped the key in his pocket. The two sailors went below.

"Right here on the bridge is the safest place we can keep it," said Captain Mac. "I'll keep the key, and if they try to force the lock they'll be seen by the officer on watch. Pass the word along that the mate on watch is to keep an eye on the locker."

"Very well, cap'n," said Tommy in a low voice.

"The silver will have to be turned over to the Panamanian Consul-General in New York, and the owner, if he puts in his claim, will be paid its face value in American money; and the silver will be returned to Panama. The man who smuggled it aboard will certainly be fired out of the line, and black-balled. I don't like to cause any one trouble, but we can't let the *Hawk* get the name for carrying contraband. If a steamship company expects to do business with a foreign country, they must obey the rules of that country. Do you see?"

"Yes, sir; I guess that's right," said Tommy.

The little captain went to his room; and Tommy, his feet dragging, his head down, walked to the wing of the bridge, where he stood, a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, fear gnawing at his heart, staring ahead into the tropic night. A silver crescent of moon peeped over the eastern searim; the cool, sweet breeze fanned his cheeks and ruffled his hair; the stars twinkled bravely in the blue dome of sky; but all the beauty and wonder of the universe could not have lightened the slightest the burden of worry that was Tommy's.

For two weeks his mind had dwelt on the probable penalty that would be his if convicted of giving his mate's license into

the hands of another, and his fears had multiplied. And to top it all, the captain had unknowingly placed him in a position where he was bound to assist in preventing the silver getting into the possession of Myer, the man for whom it was intended! The game was up now surely; the question was, would Myer fulfil his threat? The fat man would, Tommy knew; Myer was that kind.



THE *Hawk* passed out of the Windward Passage and into the rolling Atlantic, and the course was set due north by Polaris, mounting higher and higher in the sky as the little old freighter climbed the parallels. Into the steaming Gulf Stream she went, and for eight hours her decks were wet with the mist resulting from the combination of warm tropic water and cold northern breezes; then they left the stream astern and steamed into the bitter biting cold of the Winter-time north Atlantic. Ten o'clock at night, nearly seven days after leaving the pier at Porto Bello, found Scotland light-vessel, which is Sandy Hook, abeam; and Captain Mac ordered the speed reduced to twenty-five revolutions of the propeller per minute.

"That'll give her four knots," he said to Tommy. "I won't go in before daybreak in the morning. Make the course east, and tell the second mate to haul her about to west again when she has logged sixteen miles. I'm going to turn in now; tell the second mate to call me at four. We ought to fetch Scotland again by six."

He stood for a moment while Tommy was making the new course, then went into his room.

Tommy took his position in the starboard wing with the collar of his greatcoat turned up, his cap pulled low over his forehead and his eyes barely topping the weather-cloth. The wind, cold and wet and penetrating, came out of the northeast, and the sound of it in the rigging was a surly whine. The tops of the long, lazy swells were whipped off and fine spray was sent driving down the wind. Great graybacks slopped over the weather bow and thundered into the waist.

Scupper lids clanged, wires hummed, tackles clacked; ice pendants formed on the lower rigging; a film of ice formed on Tommy's coat and cap. Landsmen say that sea-water will not freeze; but try to tell a sailor that! *He knows!*

Scotland and Ambrose light-vessels, Highland light and the loom of New York were now over the stern. For four hours the *Hawk* would steam eastward; then she would haul about and make for the light-vessels again. Captain Mac preferred this maneuver to anchoring.

Tommy jumped and thrashed his arms to quicken the circulation of his blood. The helmsman steered with one hand and slapped the other against his thigh.

"An hour and a half more, Larkin," said Tommy.

"Aye, sir," said Larkin.

He put down a spoke and searched the leaden, low-hanging sky for a star to steer by.

He was a big man, this Larkin, two hundred and forty pounds of him; a Dane from the Skagerrack, the breeding-ground of stalwart seamen.

Tommy turned his back to Larkin and gazed down at the rushing water in the waist.

"Let 'er fall off a bit, Larkin," he said after a while. "Maybe she'll ride easier."

The helmsman did not answer, and Tommy again called the order over his shoulder—

"Larkin, let 'er fall off a half-point."

Still there was no answer, and Tommy started to turn—

"Put up you' han's!" growled a deep voice; and something hard dug into Tommy's ribs.

A man with a colored handkerchief across the lower part of his face stood at Tommy's side. In one hand he held a long, blue-steel revolver; and the muzzle of the revolver pressed tightly against Tommy's coat.

Larkin stood at the wheel, his hands on the spokes and his eyes straight ahead; and on each side of him stood a man, masked men both of them, but firemen by their dress. The Dane's face was expressionless, and he steered calmly, as if nothing else concerned him.

Two other men, one of them armed with a short bar, stood near the locker containing the case of silver coin.

Tommy looked down at the revolver and into the hard eyes of the man holding it; and he slowly raised his hands above his head. The fireman backed Tommy into the corner of the bridge and held him there while the two men worked with their bar at the door of the locker.

There was a sound; the door opened; one man flashed a light and the other stepped within the locker. The man holding the flashlight and one of the men by Larkin took several small canvas sacks from their pockets and tossed them to the man who had entered the locker. There came the sound of rending wood, then the clink of coins; then a harsh exclamation of surprize.

The man came out of the locker. He spread his hands and lifted his shoulders; and Spanish poured in a stream from his lips. The man with the light stepped within the locker, and so did one of the men by Larkin.

They came out swearing, gesticulating, talking rapidly and excitedly. The man holding the revolver against Tommy turned his head and threw a sharp question over his shoulder.

Tommy quickly dropped his hands. He knocked the revolver aside and drove his fist to the man's chin. The revolver roared, and splinters flew from the wooden deck. The fireman was backing away, and Tommy was trying to wrench the revolver from his hand.

Tommy suddenly slipped; the fireman twisted his pistol hand free. The revolver rose, and then the barrel of it crashed down upon Tommy's head. A dazzling white light flashed before Tommy's eyes; there was a shower of falling stars. He lurched to his knees, then to his elbows; something warm ran into his eyes.

He could hear blows and trampling feet and knew that somewhere—far, far off it seemed—men were fighting. He shook his head and with one hand gripped a stanchion, tried to draw himself erect.

A heavy sea slapped against the bow, and water shot high in the air. Carried down on the wind, it deluged the bridge; and the cold shock of it drove the fog from Tommy's brain and gave him strength. He gained his feet and wiped the blood from his eyes with his sleeve.

Larkin and the five firemen were struggling fiercely in the center of the bridge. The Dane was down; but even as Tommy staggered toward him he got his feet under him and threshed about with his mighty arms. A man screamed and staggered clear with a broken arm; another was sent hurtling down the ladder to the main deck.

A hand was lifted holding the revolver;

another hand struck it, and the weapon was sent spinning over the side. Larkin grunted and fell back as a heavy brogue drove into his stomach; then with a deep rumble of rage he plunged again into the fray.

Tommy, both fists swinging, ran to help the Dane. He sent a long, swinging uppercut to a fireman's face, missed another and fell from the force of his swing. He rolled over and over rapidly to get clear of the flying feet and brought up in the wing of the bridge.

Captain Mac, in trousers, sweater and slippers, came flying from his room and plunged gleefully into the fray. After him came old Tenny, the chief mate, armed with a short heavy billy; and he cackled delightedly as his first swing met a fireman's head.

The second mate, cursing his own tardiness, came from his room in time to see the three driven into the corner of the bridge, where they held their hands up palm outward as a sign of surrender. The fireman with the broken arm had escaped below, and so had the one that Larkin had thrown down the ladder.

The *Hawk* was rolling loggily in the trough, and Larkin, blood streaming from a three-inch knife-gash in his cheek, stepped to the wheel and began to put down spokes, to bring the ship up in the wind.

Tommy, his face smeary with blood from the cut in his scalp, swayed drunkenly against the binnacle. Between Tommy's feet lay a canvas sack, partly filled with coins.

Tenny went to his room and returned in a moment with handcuffs, and the three firemen were quickly shackled together.

"Confine them in the storeroom," said Captain Mac.

Tenny led his prisoners below.

The second mate returned to his room to dress properly for his watch, the twelve-to-four.

"Now let's have a look," said Captain Mac; and he stepped to the locker.

Larkin held the binnacle light so that it would shine in the locker, and Tommy looked over the captain's shoulder. The little captain exclaimed in surprize, and bent closer.

"Why, — it, there's nothing in that case but pig iron!" he exclaimed. "The top layer was silver coins all right, in case somebody took off the lid, but the rest was

nothing but pig iron! The man who packed this case did a good piece of business for himself."

"Wa Fung!" said Tommy.

"What?" asked Captain Mac.

"I—was speaking to Larkin, sir," said Tommy.

The second mate came to the bridge, and with him came a man to relieve Larkin.

"You had a big night, Larkin," said the second mate, grinning.

"Ay tank so, sir!" answered the Dane.

"And tomorrow'll be a big day, too!" thought Tommy.



THE *Hawk* made fast to her West Street pier at ten the next morning. Tommy went to his room and sat for some time buried in thought.

"I won't go on the pier at all," he told himself. "I'll make Myer come aboard for me, and I'll see him here in this room. I'll tell him the truth and ask him for my mate's certificate. Then if he refuses to believe me, if he thinks I've got his — silver hid away some place, I'll choke him till his tongue hangs out a mile—or till he comes clean and gives me my ticket!"

So Tommy waited. But Myer did not come aboard, nor did he send any word. Noon sounded on the ship's bell, but still the fat man did not appear.

The second mate, on his way to the mess-room, paused at Tommy's door.

"Say," he said, "look at the letter I got this morning. Mailed the day we sailed. Nothing in it but this."

He held before Tommy's startled eyes a mate's license.

"Whose—whose—"

"It's mine," said the second mate. "It must have been missing out of the board ever since we left New York. Funny thing, huh?"

"Gosh, I'll say it is," said Tommy.

The second mate passed on, still wondering.

Tommy rose slowly from his chair; and slowly he walked from his room to the chart-room. Slowly, fearfully, he looked at the license board; counted the certificates. There were three; he read the names written upon them—

"John McGuire," "Aaron Tenny," "Thomas Downs!"

His mind flashed to the conclusion: The night he had come aboard drunk for his license the chart-room had been dark, and he must have taken the second mate's license and given it to Myer instead of his own! That was it! And Myer, discovering the mistake, and no doubt supposing that Tommy would too, had simply placed the second mate's license in an envelope and mailed it to him.

"I'll give him credit for that," said Tommy, "and take that much from his account."

Hurriedly he left the chart-room, went below and down the gangway to the pier. He looked about the pier but did not see Myer and decided to inquire in Tony Acosta's across the street from the pier entrance.

There were no customers in Tony's place. The bartender lounged over a newspaper, spread before him on the bar.

"Is Myer around?" asked Tommy.

"What's 'at?" asked the bartender, a surprised look in his eye.

"Is Myer around?"

"You wanta see 'im?"

"Yes," said Tommy, grimly. "I want to see him."

"You'll have to go to jail then if you do," said the bartender. "Myer got two years fer pedlin' coke. Sentenced yesterday. Tough on Myer—huh?"

"Yeah," said Tommy; and then—"Just when I wanted to see 'im, too!"

He smacked his right fist into the palm of his left hand and shook his head.

Tommy strode out of Tony Acosta's and turned up West Street. It was cold and raining drearily. The street was inches deep with slush and water. It was a miserable day—but not to Tommy Downs. His heart was light.

He tossed a dime to a shoe-string pedler; purchased an apple from a fruit-stand and fed it to a weary-looking horse; untied a can from a yellow pup's tail and scattered the hoodlums who were tormenting it. With head up and shoulders back he swung across the street and shocked a waterfront missionary by singing "Sally Brown."

THE MEANING OF "P. K."

by Raymond W. Thorp

JEFFERSON City, Missouri, has produced some famous lawyers. One of them was Colonel Ed. J. Belch, and the following tale is of his most famous case.

General Sterling Price, in his raid through Missouri in September, 1864, captured the town of Pilot Knob. The Pilot Knob Iron Company had a great many fine mules which were branded "P. K." Price confiscated these.

A few weeks later, when the Confederate troops got near Jefferson City, two of the mules became so lame that they could not travel. The Confederates left them with an old farmer by the name of Brown, and took two fresh mules from him in their place. Brown nursed them to strength and by Spring he had a fine span of sixteen-hand mules, able to do an immense amount of farm work.

One of his neighbors, who was jealous, reported to The Pilot Knob Iron Company the whereabouts of the animals and they sent an agent to look for them, who, after seeing the mules, instituted a replevin suit in a justice's court. But Farmer Brown did not like the idea of giving up the mules and forthwith he employed Belch to defend the case.

The agent for the company identified the mules in a general sort of way, but particularly by the brand, "P. K." which was on them. He said that this was the company's brand and that he was positive they were the plaintiff's mules which had been taken by Price the Fall before. The defendant could state only the manner and time of his securing the mules, and their condition

when he got them. Belch made a short but very convincing argument:

"Gentlemen of the Jury," he began, "here is this hireling of a big corporation running around over the country, hunting up mules left at different places by Price's army. He has jumped old man Brown and is trying to take away his only means of making a crop this Summer. When Brown got these mules they were broken down, lame and poor, and could do nothing but eat.

"Now he has nursed them, fed and curried them and just got them in the shape to do a little work, and this fellow pops up and claims them. And on what kind of evidence? He can't identify the mules. He never worked them, never fed them, but just identified them by the brand, 'P. K.' He says this stand for Pilot Knob.

"He must think that we in Cole County are sure enough suckers. P. K.! Pilot Knob! Who ever heard of anybody spelling Knob with a 'K?' N-O-B spells Knob and I have got it right here in the dictionary. I will tell you, gentlemen, what 'P. K.' stands for. It stands for 'Price's Cavalry,' and all the evidence in this case shows it plainly.

"In all of my experience I have never seen a clearer case of corroboration. Brown got his mules from Price's army, they taking in return his mules. Price's army was all cavalry. 'P. K.' stands for 'Price's Cavalry.'"

The jury promptly returned a verdict for the defendant, and the agent for the iron company was so much disgusted with Cole County justice that he did not even make an appeal.





Iroquois! Iroquois!

A Five-Part Story Part III

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "Rifle Rule," "Old Misery," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

IN 1764, eleven years before the colonies dug up the red ax with England, I had been brought to the Canajoharie district of New York by my Uncle David Whittlesey. Here I learned to know the Indians as brothers, and the Mohawk leader, Joseph Brant, as a friend.

Best of all I knew Horace Martin, self-styled "last of the macaronis," who forever prated of the decline of manners in these times. His incessant tirades earned him the nickname "Mad" Martin.

Not until 1774 did Martin tell me that he had a daughter.

"You—married!" I cried out in surprise.

"My wife was of Seneca-French blood. She died when Nancy was born. Nancy I left in Montreal with her grandfather. Now she is coming to me," he explained.

A few days later Nancy Martin arrived. She was a strange mixture of white and Indian, lapsing at will into the tricks of either race, and knowing the customs of both.

One morning my uncle gave me a beautiful new rifle, with a secret compartment in the stock, and in a few words told me that there was danger of war.

To my inquiries he replied:

"Donald MacDonald, the Johnstown Highlander is traveling around and talking loud. Sheriff White is sending a man named Newberry up and down the river to threaten the settlers. But our Tryon County Committee of Safety will stop their tongues."

His words were borne out by Peter Bolduc, a French-Canadian trader who arrived a few days later.

"Tell your uncle," he warned me, "that a call has been sent out for a Continental Congress to meet on September fourth in Philadelphia."

I hastened to the Martin house and learned from Nancy that in case of war the Indians might very easily side with England. As she was a member of the Wolf clan, Nancy knew many of the Indians' secrets.

The next day I had a fight with the drunken New-

berry for insulting Nancy, and knocked him down, breaking his jaw.

This grievance, added to Donald MacDonald's hatred for me and my uncle, because of our siding with the colonies against the king, soon brought a warrant for my arrest.

"You'll not be long in jail, Benajah," my uncle told me.

"Let him try to make trouble and we'll make an example Tryon County law-breakers will long remember," cried MacDonald.

Outraged to the bottom of my soul, I set out, leaving my uncle behind, for the jail at Johnstown.

However, I stayed in jail but a short time. Nancy came to Joseph Brant, and told him that I was a member of the Wolf clan, because I had been adopted by a Wolf woman for saving her son. It was this relationship which freed me, although I had not been legally adopted by the clan.

On our way home Nancy told me that Captain Robert Welles had written her father, and that he was moving to Cherry Valley.

Long after Nancy had moved away, in the Summer of 1775, I came home one day to find a note from my uncle saying that he was trailing Long Gentry, the renegade.

I was terrorized when I heard that following my uncle was another renegade, "Injun" McFee. Here was a real danger: My uncle was between two enemies.

A few days later, following my uncle's trail, I found him murdered. The little black book in which he kept the names of the Committee of Safety was missing.

Leaving my uncle to be buried by friends and urged on by them, I started again to hunt down the murderer.

Going cautiously through the woods, I heard a commanding question:

"Who are you?"

I halted.

"Richard Claus," I improvised.

Satisfied that I was really a Claus and a king's man, my questioner told me that he was Long Gentry.

I covered my surprise, and learned that Sir John Johnson, who ruled Johnstown, was aiding his own family to get into Canada and would go there himself in time. It was the Johnsons in Canada, who with money were pushing the Indians to depredation on the whites.

After Gentry took all my money, he suddenly drew from his pocket a little book: My uncle's.

"Here, read this," he said.

Slowly I read off the names, until, Gentry leaning over the book and off his guard, I leaped upon him. In a few mad whirls he carried us both into the river, from which I rose, his knife in my hand and his blood coloring the water.

"**I**T'S not reading at all. It's like bird tracks. There's no sense in it," I mumbled, and continued staring at the collection of absurd marks.

"If it is wished, Peter Bolduc is ready to lend assistance. We will call it payment for the rifle. That is, if there is nothing that *m'sieur* would regret showing to another."

"It's foolishness," I growled. "I could show it to the whole province and betray no secrets."

The Frenchman dropped beside me and gazed curiously at the paper, and gently reminded me:

"Pardon, *m'sieur*; but men do not bother to write foolishness and then wrap the writing in oiled-cloth to keep out the wet; and then pay a man to bring it to this carrying-place of the Oneidas. There are two people who can read whatever is written: The sender and the man who receives the message."

"I am positive it was written at Johnson Hall by Sir John, and that it was written for Guy Johnson in Montreal. My poor uncle got wind of it some way and lost his life, trying to stop it from being delivered," I sadly explained.

"Foot of a fox! If the writer had only signed his name in cipher! That is what it is: A cipher arranged between them. But it can not be as deep as this creek, nor as high as Fall Hill. It is a cipher they made up even as children can make them."

"Each of those figures stands for a letter. We must dig them out. Now let us use the reason the good God has given us. Seven times does a '7' show. Nothing else is repeated so many times."

"The next in frequency is made of three straight lines passing through a common

On regaining the bank, I stared into the eyes of Peter Bolduc.

We dragged Gentry's body to land and searched it. In his pocket I found a paper on which were the characters:

x * 1810 + 8C 87 + 199

6 2 * x 0 7 7 # # # * x v # 7 # # 8

x 1 8 2 8 x c * a 7 6 L 6 5 4

9 0 * # 1 # # # #

"*M'sieur* finds bad reading?" politely asked Bolduc.

center. It shows six times, I believe. *M'sieur*, the letter 'E' comes with the most frequency. Behold, we have the '7' doubled at the end of a word. Let us think of a word that ends with 'ee.'"

"Shawnee," I promptly said, my interest growing very sharp, as I believed we had planted one foot on the hidden trail.

"Ah! to be a scholar! So it does!" cried Bolduc. "Behold one word—a very sinister word in these bad days! God is good to us. If *m'sieur* is right we have dug six different letters from the hole. Let me write them in."

He found a smooth piece of bark and neatly scratched with his knife the six letters over the strange characters. Then he excitedly cried:

"The letter 'A' shows his head six times, if Peter Bolduc reasons right. That character comes third and last in the last word. Some letter is doubled before that final 'A.' It looks like two pieces of a white-washed fence around some of the houses in Detroit. Ah, thou stubborn one!"

I was now filled with the spirit of discoverer and explorer, and I pointed to the third word from the end where he had scratched in 'a-es,' and eagerly suggested—

"That word might well be 'axes.'"

"Head of a scholar! 'Shawnee—axes!' But of course! I congratulate *m'sieur*! Now let us look at the last word ending in a letter repeated, and which we hope is an 'A.'"

It was as plain as my big nose, but my wits were slow. The Frenchman sharply cried:

"'Tunadilla! The two 'A's' come in place——"

"One too many letters," I objected.

The Frenchman counted them and sighed. I continued:

"But you call it as Joseph Brant always

calls it in the Mohawk. We settlers always call it 'Unadilla.' And that fits!"

"Such a head!" explosively admired the trader, as if he were not doing all the work.

And his knife-point flew rapidly over the bark, scratching in bits of translation, crossing out and beginning anew, until I leaned back against the tree and left the task to him.

Finally he dropped the knife and drew a deep breath of relief and quietly said:

"If *m'sieur* will be so good as to listen. It is all here. It is good this writing was stopped. It will be very bad if something else is not stopped. The Shawnee have never forgiven Point Pleasant. A very bad business must be cleaned up. This is what the writing says:

"Waiting to receive Shawnee black belt with two axes from Unadilla."

"You are a very intelligent man, Peter Bolduc," I praised him. "You have found the secret in that piece of paper. It is you who will have *Goragh* added to your name."

"*M'sieur's* words are like a bird that flies as high as the hill after leaving the ground to perch on a small tree. We have dug out the words, but what do they mean? 'Waiting' for what?"

"To receive the black belt."

He shook his head mournfully and replied: "Not enough. He is waiting to receive the bad belt before he does something. Now what will he do *after* he receives the bad belt? He knows. Guy Johnson knows."

My hopes fell. When it came to guessing the innumerable things Sir John might do after receiving the Shawnee black wampum the mystery was clean beyond me.

The trader pursed his lips and muttered:

"Come, old stupid head! Come! You know it is something Guy Johnson is waiting for him to do. Something he is hoping he will do. Sir John simply answers that he is waiting until he receives the belt."

"Guy Johnson didn't dare wait for anything. Tryon County got too hot for him. He ran away to Canada," I said.

"Ran away to Canada," slowly repeated the trader. "What would old *m'sieur* be waiting for? *Le fou!* But yes; let them call me that! Call me 'poor old Bolduc of the empty head!' Why, what could he be waiting for except for the time when he could run away to Canada also? What good

would the black belt do him and his king if he kept it at Johnson Hall?"

"*Yo-hah!*" I warmly applauded. "Peter Bolduc, you are a very wise man. I travel to the Unadilla settlement. Where do you go?"

He half-closed his eyes and gesticulated languidly with both hands, and murmured:

"What would you have? My Oneidas are friendly and will not follow Brant and his Mohawks. Yet they and the Onondagas talk only of war and will not hunt, nor plant crops. My trade is spoiled. I find but one path open. It leads south."

I was hoping he would say that; for never in my life had I felt so lonely and downhearted.

"You will go with me?" I cried.

"It would be my preference if *m'sieur* would give his *consentment*," he politely retorted.

"The Mohawks," he went on, "always said all outside business must be done through the Eastern Door; that it was dangerous for Peter Bolduc, or other Frenchmen, to enter the Long House by the central chimney as we might fall into the Great Council Fire and be burned up. But behold!

"The Eastern Door swings wide open. The Keepers are gone. The — is after us all. If I can not trade in ginseng I will trade in black belts. We will see what we will find in Unadilla."



I KNEW I was doing what my uncle would have me do. By the time I could reach home the neighbors would have buried him; and he was never one to permit sentiment to interfere with duty.

As I astonished the Frenchman by making the cipher message disappear in the butt of my rifle, I recalled the time I asked my uncle the purpose of the secret cavity, and how he had replied that it might be an excellent place to carry that which should be concealed.

Uncle David had no use for trinkets and tricks. In ordering Golcher to make the hidden patch-box he had foreseen the time when such a place of concealment would be of prime value. Doubtless he had expected it as a repository for papers carried by provincial spies if war ever came. Now it served to hold a secret communication between the Johnsons.

But Bolduc was ready to make tracks to

Egwagy Creek and thence down the Unadilla, and I ceased my speculations. My friend paused only long enough to carve in the bark of a tree near the grave the name of the murderer, his crime and the date of his death before leading the way to the southeast.

Bolduc was a very methodical man and explained that a record should be preserved of Gentry's death.

We kept clear of the houses around Fort Stanwix and, later, of the river-road by striking into the Oneida trail that followed down the Unadilla to the mouth of that stream.

That night we camped on the site of an Oneida town, occupied before the Indians had procured axes from the white men, and when they were dependent on fallen timber for fuel and were forced to move after a stay of ten or fifteen years in one place.

Bolduc was naturally a merry fellow, but his mood was depressed when we renewed the journey in the morning.

"My trade is spoiled," he told me.

"Only for a short time," I said encouragingly.

"Oh, no, *m'sieur*. For all time, something seems to tell Peter Bolduc. The Iroquois believe the colonies are as bad as the French to oppose the king. Even the Oneidas, who are friendly to us, do not understand why there should be war. The Onondagas are divided. None of the Six Nations will work or trade. They are waiting to see what will happen."

"They will see the Mohawks follow Joseph Brant," I admitted.

He grimaced and threw out a hand and cried:

"—! All but the Oneidas and a few of the Onondagas will follow Brant or the Johnsons."

"But will they follow any one back to do damage to the valley?" I asked.

The suggestion that the Mohawks would harm their old friends still seemed to me to be preposterous.

"Oh, my young friend! Do not mistake," sighed Bolduc. "Look for the worst. The old sacrifices to Aireskoi will be renewed, I fear."

"A barbecue of bears."

"I said the *old* sacrifice, *m'sieur*. When they roasted and ate a woman. There will be no substitutes if they sacrifice in the old way."

I warmly denounced such a dire prophecy, and insisted:

"Never with the Mohawks; nor with the other nations. Think of the Mohawks who are good readers and writers. There are some who know their English grammar and their arithmetic; and I have met a few who are considerably advanced in Latin and Greek. The rites of Aireskoi are buried in ancient times."

"*Bien, m'sieur!* But go and look for your readers and writers now. You will find them savages. The white man's school is not good for the Indian if the Indian goes from school back to his old home to live in savagery. No, no."

"You're a gloomy prophet, Peter Bolduc," I glumly remarked.

"Pity and save us!" he piously cried. "But is poor Peter, the trader, to be blamed if he looks down the years and sees the hot axes of the Iroquois, and their victims squirming and screaming on the high torture stages? The sun has gone from my heart, *m'sieur*. It all rests with the good God."

We covered the path down Egwagy Creek without incident. When Bolduc was in the lead we moved slowly because of his caution. He always carried himself as if scouting through a hostile red country, whereas I would have smashed ahead and feared only lawless whites. It was not until we reached the Unadilla that anything of interest occurred. It was of no importance, yet an entirely new experience to me.

We had paused to rest at one side of the trail, at a point due west from Otsego Lake my companion informed me, and my friend was soberly silent. I had learned that when he was in a black mood it was best to hold my tongue until he had worked out of the spell. My own thoughts were gloomy enough, for I was ever thinking of my uncle.

Suddenly Bolduc jerked up his head and lightly rested a hand on my knee. I heard nothing except some squirrels chattering in a stand of beech.

With his lips to my ear he whispered—

"Some one comes—from the north!"

Ordinarily I would have carelessly advanced to the trail to give greetings, be the newcomer red or white. But now, for the first time, I was impelled to practise stealth, a behavior that is based on fear. For a distance of fifty yards the trail was clear on our side of the trail and our position behind the big beech trees was excellent for spying.

The Frenchman again whispered in my ear, this time saying—

"There are several of them."

How he should know this was beyond me unless the squirrels' continuous scolding was telling him. Silently a bronze chest appeared in the mouth of the leafy tunnel, and the next second an Iroquois came into the little opening. His glance darted from side to side. Behind him came another, then another; and by the time the leader was nearly abreast of our position there was an even dozen of them, each man stepping in the tracks of the man ahead of him.

Each carried an excellent gun and wore a knife in his girdle. I knew if they turned their backs I would behold a tomahawk in each girdle. Yet they were no different from any hunting-party; and aside from knowing they were not Mohawks, I could not name their nation until I had heard them talk.

The trader murmured:

"The leader is a Seneca. The others are Onondagas."

His voice was so low it did not seem the human ear could hear it at a distance of two feet. Yet the line halted and stiffened, and every fierce face was turned in our direction. My elbow slipped off a root and caused a sumac bush to move slightly. The twelve men vanished.

I winked my eyes at the suddenness of their disappearance. Each man had tread himself with marvelous celerity. Each had responded to instinct before the brain could analyze the suspicious sound.

The trader jumped to his feet and called out—

"Your friend, Peter Bolduc, is here."

He spoke in the Onondaga dialect, which the Iroquois hold to be the most polished and impressive of the Six Tongues; just as they hold the Oneida in the least esteem, although to the white ear the speech of the Rock People is the most pleasing heard in the Long House.

Bolduc walked briskly to the path and I trailed behind him. The twelve men regained the trail as one. The Seneca asked—

"Why do friends hide behind trees when the men of the Long House walk in a path?"

"They did not hide. They were tired and rested," said Bolduc. "The man of the Nundawaono and his brothers, the Onundagaono, step so softly even a deer can not hear them when they are very near."

"The trader is known to the Hodenosaunee. His friend is a stranger," said the Seneca.

One of the Onondagas spoke up and said—

"He has been at Johnstown."

"He has been many times in the house of Thayendanegea," added Bolduc.

I said—

"Among the Mohawks he carries the road-belts of Thayendanegea."

"No red ax sticks in the war-post," said the Seneca. "The white men see no men of the Hodenosaunee painted for war. Where do the white men walk?"

"To Tunadilla," replied Bolduc.

"Why does he not walk on the white man's path beyond the river?"

"Because he is a friend of the Oneidas, and they give him belts to follow this path."

It was not for a Seneca to dictate who should walk in an Oneida path. It was for them to question and give orders when a stranger attempted to pass through the Western Door. The Seneca did not relish Bolduc's reminder, and he lowered on us. An Onondaga spoke up to smooth our path by saying:

"The trader has a mat in our villages. The path is open for him and his friend. They will walk first. The Hodenosaunee will keep bad flesh from following them."

"Our eyes are bright and our hearts are strong for meeting our brothers," said Bolduc. "Do the Hodenosaunee go to trade at Tunadilla?"

"There is no white trade where the river ends," discouraged the Seneca.

"They say the Shawnee will bring a trade to Tunadilla," said Bolduc. "If they will bring it to Oneida Lake their hearts shall be glad."


"There is no white trade there," repeated the Seneca, and his voice was very stern. "What foolish bird has lighted on the white man's shoulder and told him the Shawnees come to the mouth of the river?"

"A white man at the Oneida carrying-place told him. If they do not come farther than Oghwaga Bolduc turns back."

"The path is open," repeated the Onondaga man. "But wise men do not follow an empty path. The white man's trade is on Oneida Lake. Has he trade-belts for this river and the Susquehanna?"

"He has no belts. Nor does he carry any goods down the river."

"Let him walk ahead. He will find no Shawnees there."

 TRAILING Gentry's long rifle, Bolduc struck off down the path. Neither of us looked back for the first mile. Then Bolduc slackened his pace and said:

"They did not offer us tobacco, but they will not harm us. They are worrying over the way the white men are acting."

"They did not want us to come down the river after you mentioned the Shawnee."

"This is an Oneida path. I wanted to know if they had heard about the Shawnees coming to Tunadilla. Now I know. They are going to meet them." Whether he knew or was making a clever guess, I could not tell.

We moved along for half a mile, this time Bolduc in the rear, when I saw what I took to be a dead squirrel in the path. It is very seldom one sees a dead squirrel in the woods. I halted and a second glance told me it was the entire skin of the little creature made into a tobacco pouch. Bolduc came up. He glanced at it and said—

"It was dropped by a man of the Fourth Fire."

And he picked it up and pointed to a crude outline on the rawhide thong which he pronounced to represent a rock.

If an Oneida was in the neighborhood I was less averse to meeting him than a man from any of the other nations. I pocketed the pouch and we cast about and close by discovered where some one had left the trail. With unerring craft Bolduc followed the signs and soon halted at the river bank. Some distance below us an Indian was placing a canoe in the water.

"I know him," murmured Bolduc. "He has traded with me. Last year he took his squaw to Tunadilla to live."

He stepped clear of the bushes and raised a hand and called out in the musical Oneida dialect:

"Ho, little brother of the Stone People! We are glad to see you. We bring something you lost."

And thus prompted I pulled out and exhibited the tobacco pouch.

The Oneida, a young man of about my age, came running up to us, and greeting us, said:

"Tall Rock's heart is glad. The trader brings the sun to our villages."

I gave him the pouch, and Bolduc told him who I was. He had heard of me from mutual friends among the Mohawks and we shook hands heartily. The trader explained I was a "Bostonian." But to be against the king lowered me none in his estimation. His gaze roamed the river banks suspiciously, however, when the trader spoke of the Seneca man and the Onondagas up the stream.

He appeared to be uneasy.

It had been many years when one Iroquois was not glad to meet another from a different nation. He began working toward his canoe, and we went with him. The craft was of red elm bark and much inferior to those made from the "canoe" birch—which did not grow in the home country of the Iroquois—and which, unlike the birch, would warp unless drawn from the water to dry. The canoe suggested easy and rapid travel.

I asked him to take us with him as far as he went. He was very agreeable to the proposition and stated he was bound for home. Bolduc thought we should give the canoe more time to dry but the Oneida was anxious to be traveling; so we embarked and glided down the river.

The elm, under any circumstances, is more difficult to handle than a birch—perhaps the reason for the Hurons whipping the Iroquois on Lake Champlain—and Bolduc was right in believing it had not thoroughly dried out. We had gone less than a mile when it handled sluggishly. In taking a bend it responded so slowly as to pile us up on a rock.

Fortunately the water was shallow, and we waded to the east bank without much of a wetting. The Oneida attributed the accident to the work of an evil spirit, his liquid speech sounding like the notes of a song-bird compared with the vigorous tongue of the Onondagas.

Peter Bolduc suggested a monster turtle on the bottom of the river was the evil agency causing our upset. The Oneida at once was convinced it was the shell of the turtle and not a rock that the canoe had hit.

"Are there any Southerners—Shawnees—at Unadilla?" I asked Tall Rock.

He did not answer for a minute, but I was patient. Then he told me:

"The Shawnees were not there when I came up the river. Voices talk in the air like owls at night. A Flying Head was seen

in the southern sky. Some voices say it is a sign the Southerners are painting red for war. Tall Rock hears the voices. He does not like them."

Which might be interpreted as meaning he had heard rumors that the Shawnees were planning to dig up a hatchet and take revenge for the Point Pleasant battle.



WHEN within two miles of Unadilla the Oneida suddenly effaced himself from the trail. He was bringing up the rear, and when Peter Bolduc and I halted to light a pipe he failed to join us. Bolduc dismissed his disappearance with:

"Little Brother knows his Nation is disliked among the Iroquois, M'sieur Whittlesey, now it is known they will not sit opposite the Elder Brothers at the Great Fireplace in Onondaga and vote to keep hold of the English chain."

"They must know none of the other nations will harm them so long as they remain quiet in their castles. Besides, Unadilla is an Oneida town."

"Just east of the Stanwix line. They are safe until their brothers in the Long House go on the war-path. Even then if they remain quiet. But living with Mohawks and Tuscaroras in Tunadilla and on Oneida Lake is two things, *m'sieur*. Then again there are Tories in Tunadilla, who carry things with a high hand. What is worse are the runaway slaves and some deserters and quite a few men outside the law who are flocking there. Tall Rock is wise to step softly when down here."

I drew a long breath and exulted—

"At least Long Gentry has stopped living down here."

"All *m'sieur* says is very true," was the grave response. "But questions will be asked by his friends. It is well he is buried deep."

"There is the carving in the bark near his grave. It tells where he is buried."

Bolduc scratched his head and grimaced.

"I am believing, *m'sieur*, some records should not be kept. Let us hope none of his friends, who can read, happen to find the grave at the Oneida Carrying-Place. Just what does *m'sieur* think to do if he finds Shawnees at Tunadilla?"

"Learn if they have brought a bad belt."

"Certain. If he finds there is such a belt?"

"Steal it and run."

"M'sieur Whittlesey, like your distinguished uncle, you have the virtue of being direct. There is no Indian training in your manner of doing things. But the family Bolduc owes a debt to England. Peter Bolduc will pay a bit of it by helping steal the belt."

This was heartening. In all the province of New York there was none I would prefer to the Frenchman to have by my side in a woods quarrel, or in a long race through the forest. He had lived so long among the Iroquois that his talk at times was red, and, I doubt not, also his thoughts. His original plane was high above that of a trader. In bearing and address he was ever a courteous gentleman.

What tragedy drove him to the new world, and remained strong enough in influence to keep him isolated in the land of the Long House, I never learned. He had been in the country many years and, until our trouble with Great Britain, could roam more widely without belts through the Iroquois territory than any other white man I had known with the exception of Sir William.

We moved toward the settlement on the point formed by the Unadilla and the Susquehanna. I was a few rods in the lead when a frightened exclamation in the Oneida tongue caused me to signal Bolduc for caution. The high pitch of the voice told me it was a woman.

I softly advanced to where the trail left the bush-growth and discovered the cause of the suppressed outcry.

An Oneida woman was crouching against a tree with one arm flung across her face. Standing over her was a white man of evil appearance. His face was lost in a wild growth of whiskers. He was grinning savagely at the woman and was holding a small silver brooch between the fingers of his right hand.

It was obvious he had ripped the brooch from her calico gown. The brooches were good for a shilling apiece and currently passed as such. I had seen Joseph Brant's wife when she was wearing at least fifteen pounds' worth on her chintz gown.

The Oneida woman had no such display as that, but there still remained ten or a dozen on the front of her dress.

"Hand 'em all over, or I'll rip 'em off as I did this one," threatened the fellow.

In a low voice she told him several times

to go away. He did not understand and angrily warned her—

"'Nough of that talk."

And he made a menacing gesture.

The woman was frightened and her trembling fingers began plucking at a brooch. The man was either impatient or she was very clumsy; for with an oath he struck her hand aside and helped himself. As he did so I leaped from the path and drove my fist against his thick head. What the blow of itself might have failed to accomplish was made up by the smacking of his head against a tree.

He dropped like a dead man and remained motionless. I took the brooches from his hand and gave them to the startled woman and in Mohawk said:

"There is bad white flesh in Unadilla. Let the Oneida woman go without silver when she walks from her house. Let her stay close to her house."

"You are a white man. You speak with the tongue of the Fifth Fire. There is bad flesh among the houses. It is best for a woman of the People of the Rock to walk in the woods."

Bolduc's head appeared over the bushes and his sudden appearance frightened her. For without waiting to recognize the trader she gathered up her gown and scuttled away into the woods.

"Foot of a fox! What is it now?" he softly cried, pushing his way through the ground-growth and pausing to stare down at the unconscious villain.

"I caught this rascal, robbing an Oneida woman of her dress-trimmings."

"Ah, what a brave soldier he would make! Such a high heart! Such a stout spirit! He takes shilling silver-pieces from a woman!"

"He is one of several doing evil here in Unadilla."

"But yes. He is one of the lawless ones. There are plenty of his kind in the village. They may make trouble. Did he see you before he went down?"

"Aye. The thief saw me. If he hadn't, he is seeing me now. Ah, pretending to be asleep, rascal?" I asked him as I detected his eyes opening a trifle, then closing tightly. And I kicked him briskly.

With a howl he rolled over and jumped to his feet and ran away.

"He has gone to tell his friends," mused Bolduc.

"If they're of his kidney we needn't fear an army of them."

"Not if they would walk in the open. Foot of a fox, no! But there are tricks in the dark that leave the coward victor. And a shot from a bush. But color of blood! What would one have? One can not stand by and see a poor woman robbed of her silver brooches. They came from Peter Bolduc's goods on Oneida Lake. Certain! We will go on and see what we shall see."

Moving cautiously to avoid an ambush of cowardly whites we came out on the point between the two rivers and from behind some bushes surveyed the string of stout log houses and neat frame dwellings along the north bank of the Susquehanna.

The town lay on both sides of the river, the sawmill and grist-mill being on the south bank.

Several patriots with their families still stuck to their homes, although it was only a question of time when they would be forced to flee. The Loyalists could remain undisturbed even when the Iroquois walked in blood. On southern borders Quakers and other Indian-lovers were ruthlessly murdered by raiding savages, but be it ever to the honor of the Long House, the most aggressively warlike of all red men on the continent, they did not break faith with those who held their belts.

At the bloodiest period of the war the king's man and his family were as safe among them as they would be in Old England. Yet these same Loyalists must have found the company of brawling, drunken outcasts most annoying. For this class of white trash would be loyal neither to colony nor king. Just now it was to their advantage loudly to proclaim allegiance to the crown while they prepared themselves for such dastardly work as to cause Brant to call them "worse than any Indians."



WHEN we walked from the woods the group of men standing in front of a long log house ceased their loud talk and stared at us sullenly. The man I had punished broke off his narrative and hurriedly entered the house. The others continued staring at us as we took a bold course and walked up to them.

One of them exclaimed—

"By —, Bill! If that ain't Long Gentry's gun I'm a liar."

"You've drove the cross dead center, Joe."

The rogue called Bill roughly demanded of Bolduc—

"Where'd you git that gun, mister?"

"If *m'sieur* long-hair must know, I traded for it. I am Peter Bolduc, trader. I sell silver brooches to the Indian women at my place on Oneida Lake."

"It's 'tarnal queer that Long Gentry would sell his gun," persisted Bill.

"Foot of a fox! I would say *m'sieur* is sticking his long nose into Long Gentry's affairs. Let him wait and rebuke *M'sieur* Gentry for trading his gun. Why does he talk to Peter Bolduc?"

And although his speech was velvet-smooth in courtesy, I knew his attack would be that of a wildcat.

"It's all right, Bill," muttered the one called Joe. With an air of importance he continued: "I happen to know Gentry was planning a long trip. Probably he'll come back with a better gun."

"You are more amiable, *m'sieur*," softly complimented Bolduc. "I will admit that *M'sieur* Gentry has no more use for this very long gun. As *m'sieur* so wisely says *M'sieur* Gentry has taken a long trip."

A third fellow spoke up, saying—

"See the newfangled shooter t'other one has!"

Envious glances were cast at my new double-barrel. Bill, still disgruntled, said accusingly:

"He's the one Enver was talking about. Laid his new gun on him and made him chaw dirt." Then of me he demanded—

"What you mean by aiming a gun at a loyal subject of the king an' abusing him?"

"Loyal subject of the —," I hotly returned. "I had no gun in my hand when I cracked his head for being a thief."

"*M'sieur*, called Enver, was robbing a poor Indian woman of her silver brooches. He was discouraged by my young friend."

"Trot him out of the house and I'll see he tells you the same," I challenged.

For I knew there was no honest fight in the gang, and that none could play foul so long as the Frenchman stood guard. For good measure I added—

"And we're not here to answer any more questions."

"Mebbe you're here to stop a hunk of lead," bawled a voice from inside the house.

"Then shoot while under cover," advised Bolduc, dropping his long rifle across his

arm so as to cover Bill. "Else young *m'sieur* will surely kill."

The group began to dissolve, the men feeding through the doorway. Bolduc and I swiftly moved out of range by putting another cabin between us and a possible shot. The trader laughed softly and assured me:

"Not in the daytime. Not even when behind stout logs. When they take a path it will be at night. Rob a poor Oneida woman in the sunlight? Yes. Fight a man? Oh, no."

We proceeded to the river bank and gave an Indian boy a shoot of powder to set us across. It was new country to me, but Bolduc, who knew the settlement well from having passed through it many times when on trading ventures to Oghwaga below, led the way to a large log house occupied by a man named Sliter.

This settler, aided by his five husky sons, had made many improvements, and his clearing and garden-patch and orchard reflected the rewards of their industry. From what I had observed of the Indian corn-fields, I could see the grist-mill would have little to do if not for the crops raised by Sliter and his neighbors. This inattention to planting was characteristic of the red man in times of unrest. We of the upper valley knew the Mohawks remaining at Canajoharie and Fort Hunter were drawing supplies from Johnstown and Johnson Hall.

The head of the family was away, but one of his sons, Cornelius, warmly urged us to make the house our home as long as we remained in the settlement. Mrs. Sliter appeared and repeated this welcome. Bolduc wisely decided that our presence in the Sliter home would turn the lawless element across the river against the family.

"We'll camp outside," I said.

"We're strong enough to set victuals before any one we want to," Cornelius gravely assured us.

And he whistled shrilly on his fingers and very shortly four young men, all big of frame, emerged from various points on the farm, eaching carrying a rifle and coming on the run. He whistled a second signal and after a slight pause they all turned back. Then Cornelius proudly declared:

"My brothers are men. Them across the river is scum. Father'll be powerful r'iled when gits back from Cherry Valley and finds you didn't bed down here. He won't like it."

Mrs. Sliter, a very small woman to be mother of such a stalwart brood, was as eager as her oldest son in urging us to remain.

"I always have an ax handy when I'm alone and none of them big hulks over 'cross dast show a nose at this door. The Injuns never trouble us any. What about this war, mister? Is the king licked yet?"

She listened to our war-news with sparkling eyes. When we had finished she declared—

"I can run this place with the youngest boy. Cornelius, you and your brothers oughter be making tracks to Boston."

This was to Cornelius' way of thinking. He shook his big blond head and smiled happily.

"I knew you'd give in, maw," he rejoiced. "But we won't start till father comes home."

Bolduc frowned and looked very grave.

"Madame of the high heart," he began. "Of such is the border made and pushed farther on and made again. You have very brave sons. But if madame will permit an old Frenchman, who is part red from living long among the Iroquois, she will think many times before she sends her very brave sons to Boston. There is much trouble coming to this land out here. If the war keeps on all these clearings will grow up to bush. There will be need of all very brave sons to lead the fathers and mothers away from the Tunadilla."

This warning was received with smiling incredulity.

"We'll have no trouble with the Injuns, Mister Bolduc. Only the white scum is to be watched. We won't let 'em make much trouble before Cornelius and his brothers clean out that nest over 'cross."

I was inclined to believe the trader's prophecy was far fetched, and I changed the talk by commenting on the absence of Indian men from the opposite bank.

"They're all out hunting," explained Mrs. Sliter. "They was slack putting in their crops and must have meat."

"Maw always has the right of it," said Cornelius. "But the Injuns is double keen to git meat all along of some southern Injuns that are coming here to visit 'em. An Oneida man told me that much this morning. The southern Injuns must be feasted of course."

One of the boys came on the run from a cornfield up the river, and when he got

within shouting distance he informed us—

"Strange Injuns coming in over across!"

The houses on the opposite bank blocked our view. As we walked toward the boy Cornelius remarked:

"It's as the Oneida said. The southern Injuns have come. The Unadilla men will feel ashamed to be caught without meat. I'll have to send my brothers out to perch turkey and shoot some deer."

We now reached a point where we could observe the clearing across; and after one glance at the file of red men walking toward the houses Bolduc said:

"*M'sieur* need not call his brothers from their work. There is a Seneca and some Onondagas over there. They are not southern Indians. My young friend and I met and talked with them up the river. But the southerners are on their way here. Certain."



THAT he spoke the truth—for the distance was too great for me to identify the newcomers—was shown by the absence of any greeting and by the way the men scattered and entered the different houses. We returned to the Sliter house and talked idly for some time. Cornelius gave much interesting information on local conditions. One thing he said impressed me strongly. It was to the effect that an Oneida friend had told him that Joseph Brant and many Mohawks would be on the Susquehanna very soon.

He laughed as he told it, and even Bolduc qualified the statement by saying:

"It is impossible. Brant is in Canada. Next year, yes. But late next year. Not soon. And when he comes the Senecas will come with him. The Onondagas and Cayugas will come, too. But Brant will first go to Oghwaga."

"I can't believe it," growled Cornelius. "His coming with all that parcel of Injuns would mean he means mischief. No; I can't believe it, and I won't go off the river even if he shows up."

"We won't budge," warmly declared Mrs. Sliter. "I'll give Joseph Brant a piece of my mind. He's eaten corn-bread and succotash in this house too many times to come here with an ax in his hand. We've got a fine orchard. We've got our cattle. We won't haul out and leave our home to a parcel of Injuns."

A loud outcry from across interrupted our

talk. The lawless men, boisterous with drink, had arrived at some fixed purpose. For, as we watched, seven of them came around the end of the long log house and piled into a bateau.

Cornelius whistled shrilly and again his four brothers came on the run. Cornelius sharply directed:

"Do just as I tell you. Follow me to the bank. Those men are drunk. They mustn't land on this side. You're not to speak. I'll do the talking for the Sliters."

He led them down the bank while Bolduc and I took a position that would permit us to rake the boat from the upper side.

On beholding the five brothers, the trader and me, all armed, the man in the bow stood up and lifted empty hands to signal his mission was a friendly one. The bateau came on more slowly. On the opposite bank the Onondagas and the Seneca watched to see what would happen. From the woods north of the town other Indians came straggling into the clearing. They brought two deer and what I took to be much small game. They dropped their burdens for the women to care for, while they ran to the river and ranged along beside the Onondagas: All curious to enjoy the quarrel between the white men.

As the bateau grated on the bank Cornelius warned:

"That's close enough, Bill. You needn't bother to git out."

Bill complained.

"High'n mighty when a white man can't land on the south side the Susquehanna. We ain't fetching any trouble to you folks."

"You're close enough," repeated Cornelius. "What's your talk?"

"We ain't fetching any talk to you folks. We want to ask them strangers a few questions. That's all we want."

Bolduc and I advanced; and I said:

"Talk and have done with it. I'm sorry you didn't bring the man who robbed the Oneida woman."

He ignored this remark and said:

"Some Onondagas just come in with a Seneca. They fetched a piece of bark cut from a tree at the Oneida Carrying Place on Wood Creek. One of you is lugging 'round what we knew was Long Gentry's gun. Now the piece of bark has words cut in it that says Gentry is done for and buried up there on Wood Creek. Now what do you two know about it?"

"Long Gentry dead'n buried?" cried Cornelius. "That's too good news to be true!"

"It's a fact," I admitted. "He murdered my uncle, David Whittlesey of the Canajoharie district. I followed and overtook him at the creek. We fought and I killed him."

"Foot of a fox, *m'sieur*! Tell it all!" exploded Bolduc. "Seven strong men work hard to get a boat across the river. Let them have the news. Tell how he had you under his gun. How you grappled with him and rolled into the creek and killed him with his own long knife while under water."

Then to the Sliters:

"Ah, such a sight as I, Peter Bolduc, beheld! Water boiling. Strange glimpses of something coming to the top and disappearing. Then a man's hand, holding a long knife, comes up! Then my young friend comes ashore alone. —! But he shall have a new name. *Goragh* shall be added to his name."

Turning back to the bateau, and speaking more quietly, he concluded:

"It was I, Peter Bolduc, a poor ginseng trader among the Oneida and Onondaga, who watched the strangest battle ever fought. It was my knife that cut the man's name in the bark, so that the settlers around Stanwix might know they had nothing more to fear from the dead beast."

The men in the boat exchanged glances, but seemed to be tongue-tied. Undoubtedly they had expected a denial. For a minute they could not have been heard even had they spoken, so vociferous were the five brothers in yelling back to their little mother the glad news that the border was rid of Long Gentry. When they had quieted down the man Bill said:

"Our business over here is finished, mister. If you think you've made a profit by Gentry's death you're badly mistook. Gentry had friends."

"Friends of the same murderous breed but lacking his courage, *m'sieur*," softly replied Bolduc. "I can tell a friend of his by the hang-dog face of him. Injun McFee is also dead. Perhaps he has friends in Tunadilla who wish to cover his bones."

More startled glances were exchanged among our visitors; then Bill pushed the boat from the mud. As it swung out from the shore he loudly called back:

"McFee's friends will speak in good time. So will Long Gentry's."

And they hurried back as if expecting a volley.

One would think we had done the Sliters an immense personal service, so pleased were they over the grim news. And they were so anxious to make a hero of me that they bade fair to become so many nuisances. Each of the sons must examine the rifle Bolduc was carrying. Each in turn eagerly pointed to the scarred butt and stock and proclaimed it to be Gentry's gun. Bolduc tried my patience by repeating his description of the fight and adding details he had not given Gentry's friends.

By the time their tongues were weary Mrs. Sliter had hot victuals on the rough table and was insisting I sit in her husband's chair. I firmly refused the honor, and would have refused to tarry if not for hurting their feelings. It was in vain I tried to make them understand they could not afford to be known as my friends. I might as well have talked against the wind when it is blowing the wild geese before it.

After eating, Bolduc and I paid a visit to the sawmill and found it idle. We talked to the man in charge, who explained that new settlers would be few so long as the war continued. He was very pessimistic, and declared it would be better if all the patriots on the Susquehanna removed to Cherry Valley. And he reflected the indomitable spirit of the Sliters and other patriot families by adding:

"Of course I can't go. My property's here. I have three hundred acres of fat white pine a mile east of the forks, and a sixteen by twenty-two log house a pistol-shot from this mill. I fetched all the iron for my mill down the river from Otsego Lake. They must burn me before they burn the mill. But t'others are fools to stay."

That night we made a camp in the "fat" pine, although welcome at any of the Whig cabins; and a wonderful bed the forest floor of clean pine needles proved to be. In the morning we shot and cooked our breakfast as it was not right to bring trouble to the Sliters by being much around their cabin. I remained in the pines while Bolduc visited the grist-mill. He came back and reported that no strange Indians had come to the settlement, and that the white outcasts were quiet, probably sleeping off the night's liquor.

"It is my belief, my young friend, that the Shawnees may stop at Oghwaga and not come here at all. They will surely come

by the way of Oghwaga. Now if *m'sieur* so dispose, there is the river and canoes. Very soon we can be in Oghwaga."

I believed he had the right of it.



OGHWAGA was the largest and most important town in the upper Susquehanna Valley. Traders from Albany and Schenectady went there to meet the Indians from the south and west. Mohawks, Oneidas and Tuscaroras made up the native population, while the activities of land-speculators, traders and missionaries had resulted in a permanent white population.

One of the outstanding and most peculiar facts of all frontier history of North America was this fearless mingling of whites with the Iroquois under the very eaves of the Long House. And never was there a red raid on this frontier, although the Indians were the fiercest and most warlike on the continent, until well into the Revolutionary War. Vastly different was the lot of pioneers in Pennsylvania and Virginia, where red outrages were continually being perpetrated regardless of the number of white wampum strings the raiders had accepted. In truth this proximity to the Six Nations safeguarded us of the border; for neither Delaware nor Shawnee dared disturb us.

"Peter Bolduc, you speak wise words. Oghwaga is the place for the black belt to be delivered by the Shawnees. We will go down the river. If we meet them coming up we can turn back and try our luck at Unadilla."

Arriving at this decision we hastened to the river to secure a canoe. While we were looking about, Tall Rock, the Oneida, came along the bank and stood in silence for a minute. Then he said:

"A white wolf met the deer in the woods. A white hunter hurt him and drove him away."

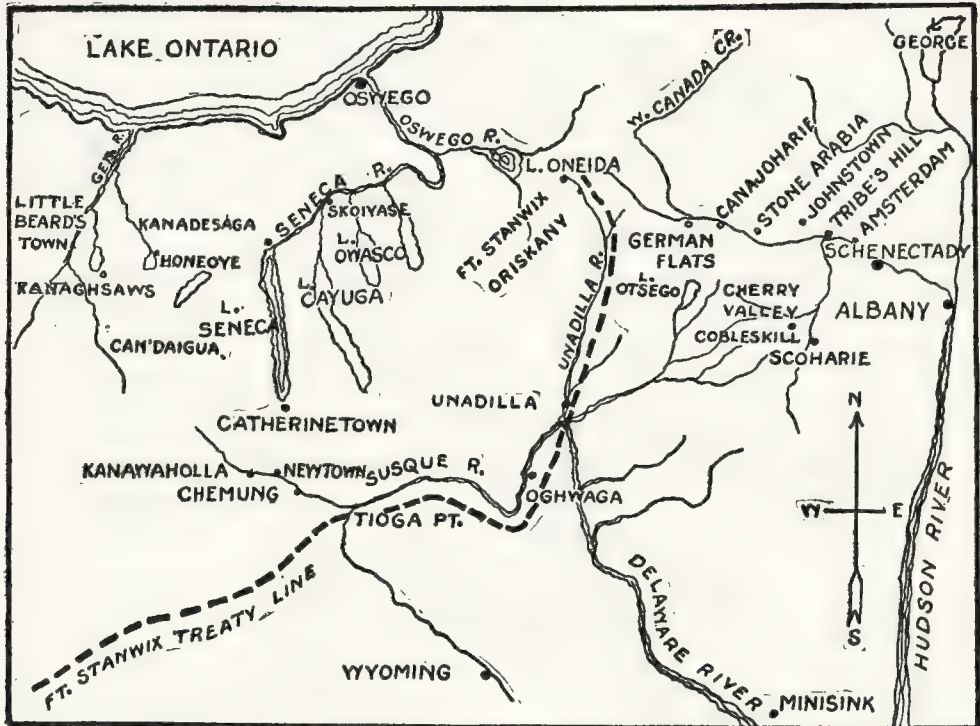
I was slow to understand his meaning and Bolduc quickly answered:

"The white hunter has the hard hand of Heno when he strikes in anger. The white wolf's head is very sore." Then in English to me—

"He is thanking you, *m'sieur*, for saving the Oneida woman from being robbed—and worse."

"Tall Rock, the Oneida, is the white hunter's brother," I said in Mohawk.

"Tall Rock remembers many things. Some things he never forgets," he replied.



"The white deer has all her silver pieces?" asked Bolduc.

"Two came off. She has put them back."

In this roundabout manner did I learn that the Oneida woman was Tall Rock's wife. And having won his gratitude I knew I was free to ask any favor, and that only death could stop him from granting it. It is a quality not always found among whites. The loyalty of a red friendship recognizes no test as being too great. I frankly explained my secret desire to secure possession of the bad belt, and told him our proposed trip to Oghwaga and our need of a canoe.

"The black belt must not be carried to the Great Fire at Onondaga, nor to the Western Door guarded by the Senecas," I concluded.

His eyes flashed, although his face remained expressionless. He waited for a minute; then said:

"To go in a canoe to Oghwaga is not hard. To come back is very hard. The men from the south have left Oghwaga and will be in Unadilla to-day. The meat is cooking in the kettles across the river to be hot when they come. A Seneca and some Onondaga men are here from the north. They come to get something and take it north."

"The bad belt with two axes in it must not reach their hands," sharply declared Peter Bolduc. "It must come to the white hunter."

"The People of the Rock remember many things that are not talked into wampum. Some things they never forget," was the quiet reply.

And without another word the man from the Fourth Fire turned and left us.

"What will he do now?" I asked of Bolduc.

The trader shrugged his shoulders and smiled, as if amused at my slow wits.

"Foot of a fox! What can the red *m'sieur* do when he owes such a debt to the white hunter? Only one request has been made. He must grant it if it costs him his life. We will wait here until we hear he is dead, or until he has brought the belt."

CHAPTER VII

THE KNIFE DECIDES

NOW in freshet times one can travel in a canoe from the center of Cherry Valley to Maryland. The whole Otsego Lake country is thus linked up with the

south. So when the Frenchman and I began making plans for our flight—if the belt were delivered to us—the Cherry Valley route to the Mohawk Valley was the only one considered. Inasmuch as the Fort Stanwix treaty placed the eastern boundary of the Long House along the Unadilla River an ascent of that water-course would carry us through a wilderness; and while the uneasy inmates of the Long House would be immediately on our left, we would find no white settlements on our right unless we left the river and traveled east for miles.

We returned to the pines to avoid embroiling the Sliters in our enterprise. Then followed dreary waiting. I began to doubt the ability of Tall Rock to secure the belt. Bolduc cheered me up a bit by reminding that, did the Oneida fail, down the river there would be other opportunities once the Shawnee delegation reached Unadilla.

Until we came into possession of the belt we would be perfectly safe in the Long House, even though the Keepers of the Eastern Door had fled, and although the Iroquois as a unit were much disturbed and worried. But to be caught by Onondaga, Cayuga or Seneca, after we had robbed a bearer of belts bound for the Great Fire in old Onondaga town, would be an entirely different matter. Then again it was desirable that the belt be taken to Tryon County as proof of a Loyalist's perfidy.

The time dragged heavily and we took turns in sleeping. I was enjoying a dream in which I was back home and Uncle David was reading aloud, when the trader touched my foot and instantly aroused me. Under the pines it was dark. Outside it was twilight.

"If *m'sieur* will be so good to eat of some bear meat we will prepare for the race," he said.

"You've killed a bear?"

"But no. I visited the Sliters and told M'sieur Cornelius we did not wish to be seen, and would he give us some cooked food. It was with difficulty I stopped him from coming with all his brothers, bringing food and ready to stand behind us. Behold the noble meat!"

I ate heartily of it, also of some coarse corn bread. When I had finished I remembered to inquire:

"How will the Oneida find us? We arranged for no meeting place."

"He will come to the spot where he left us. He will come by canoe. He will give it to us there where he made his promise."

"Peter Bolduc, you are very confident he will get the belt."

"He owes a debt," was the quiet answer. "If he does not come his woman will dance the Dance of the Dead a year from this day."

We waited until dark before stealing back to the river to squat on the bank. From the long building across came the sound of drunken merrymaking. An owl hooted from a tree close by and reminded me of Little Miss Nancy's belief in witches. The peaceful days when I borrowed books of Mr. Martin were ages behind me.

Peter Bolduc stirred uneasily and in a whisper complained.

"The evil bird! It says the North Wind is coming, bringing death to the feeble as it will to the unripe corn. It is the voice of the Evil-Minded."

"Surely you do not believe in witches and the like?"

"M'sieur Bolduc was born white and ate white bread. Bolduc, the trader, has lived a red life. How can Bolduc the trader say what M'sieur Bolduc believes? Perhaps M'sieur Bolduc never thought of witches. Perhaps he believed in honesty in men and virtue in women. Bolduc, the trader, is another man. He hears with red ears. Tonight he hears the voice of the Evil-Minded. It is as the good God rules. Bolduc, the trader, wishes Heno the Thunderer, would drive the witchbird away."

It was not for me to hurt his feelings by making light of his belief in witches. The devil uses many tools: why not humans who sold their souls for black magic? Tryon Valley had its white believers in witches as did the border of Pennsylvania, while New England had crusaded against them. Thanks to the teachings of my aunt and uncle an owl was an owl, let the devil speak with divers other voices as he would. And yet I was glad when the owl ceased its ominous questioning.

It was four hours after sunset, the night coming early now that we were near the reign of Katashhuaht the North Wind, before we heard the furtive dip of a paddle down stream. Bolduc stood up and whispered—

"He comes to pay his debt."

The drunken singing and brawling across the river grew louder. Between the outbursts we caught the *plump* of the paddle softly and rapidly driven.

"*Eh, bien!* He has had a race for it," murmured Bolduc.

I was not so confident the newcomer was the Oneida. I sensed motion on the water, like a dark patch gliding over a black floor. From down the river near the mouth of the Unadilla rose a quavering cry.

"That is a hunting-cry!" muttered Bolduc. "A Seneca gave it."

A canoe softly nosed into the bank below us, and in the soft Oneida dialect a faint voice was saying—

"He comes to find the white hunter."

"Let him come up the bank. The white hunter is here," I answered in Mohawk.

Tall Rock stood before us and, with less deliberation than is customary for one of the Long House to indulge in, informed us:

"A Seneca and some Onondagas are hunting for a lost belt. The Shawnee belt carriers are heavy at heart."

"——! He has it!" hissed Bolduc.

"Let them who carry it take the canoe and paddle very strong."

And his hand found mine and my fingers closed about a large belt.

"It is a black belt with two axes?" I asked.

"They say the two red axes speak for the Shawnees and the Mingo towns on the Ohio."

"They will kill the Oneida. He must get his woman and go with us," said Bolduc.

"No one has seen Tall Rock. The belt was taken while they were camping on the bank. They say a man swam across the river and took the belt unseen. They say he was a mile up the river and in a canoe before they began hunting. Some will say a witch stole it. The Iroquois will hunt up the Unadilla, but two of their men will come to the town and get the white men and hunt up the Susquehanna. Their paddles are many. The hunt grows warm."

"They will find the canoe where we leave it and know it belongs to the Oneida," said Bolduc.

"Tall Rock used an Onondaga canoe. It is death to stand and talk. There are two paddles."

With that he vanished, making, I believed, for the woods.

I secured the belt inside my shirt and slipped down the bank. The Frenchman

was aboard as soon as I, and we sent the stolen Onondaga craft shooting up-stream.

"I would give a season's profits for a birch," sighed Bolduc. "This is made of bitternut—hickory. It has been in the water too long."



CRIES from down the river were now being answered by red and white voices in the village. Before we drew out of hearing we recognized the voices of the brawlers asking profane questions. By degrees we left the clamor behind, but I felt that silent pursuers were on our track and drawing closer rapidly.

When it was known by the Indians in Unadilla that a bearer of belts had been robbed the native population would join in the hunt. Besides the search up the two rivers there would be bands scouring the country between. Unless the belt was recovered a serious affront had been offered the Shawnee nation and the Mingo towns.

Immemorial custom had cleared all roads for a belt-bearer. Even when his wampum was destined to be rejected his office was respected, and he carried his belt back with him. A grave reflection would be cast on the Long House if a bearer was robbed of his belt while in Iroquois territory, Seneca and Onondaga and Cayuga would be hot to catch the thief and restore the wampum.

Bolduc was thinking the same thought, for he softly called over his shoulder:

"It becomes an affair of honor, *m'sieur*. It is as bad as asking for a flag of truce and then firing on it. Even if they intended to refuse the belt they can not allow it to be stolen."

And he leaned over his side of the canoe and worked his paddle more rapidly. I caught his stroke and we forged ahead at the imminent risk of striking snag or rock in the blackness.

As we passed the small settlement at the mouth of Ouleout creek there were no lights. Without rest we labored our best until we came to the mouth of the Otsego. Nor did we cease then because we were exhausted. The Frenchman sounded the warning by politely inquiring—

"Is *m'sieur's* feet wet?"

"Soaked this half-hour."

"Ah, this cursed hickory-bark! So treacherous! It is fate, or the work of that accursed witch in the form of an owl. We must drag it ashore."

"We can not wait for it to dry. We must go on a foot."

"*Bon!* We must hide it. If found it tells we came up this way. Until they find it they hunt with a half-heart, thinking we may be on the Unadilla."

Henry Scramling, from our valley, had a thousand acres on both sides of the river near the Otsego. We saw no lights, nor did we care to bring trouble to any of the few settlers by seeking food and shelter. The canoe was worked some distance up Otsego creek and hidden under the overhanging bushes.

As I was not acquainted with the country Bolduc acted as pathfinder in the darkness, and led the way along the river. The old trail, while only a slit through the forest, permitted decent progress, and I kept at my companion's heels with the bushes rasping against my bowed head. We advanced at a trot until it grew dangerously light in the east and Bolduc announced we were close to Oneonta, where Henry Scramling's two brothers had taken up land.

Bolduc halted and said:

"We are ahead of the hunt. But we must rest and it will pass us."

"Push on! Push on!" I urged, impatient to continue the race.

"One must sleep. The chase may lead to the Mohawk. With the chase ahead one can move with leisure. Come!"

Cautiously withdrawing from the path so as to leave no sign he conducted me away from the river to the side of a low hill. For a hiding-place he selected a tiny cleared space surrounded by a dense thicket. From this position a windfall stretched to where the river made a bend around a point of natural meadowland. Where the giant trees had fallen, making a narrow slot, the brush-growth had crowded in but was not so tall that we could not see over it and catch a glimpse of a segment of the stream.

"If that witch-bird of the Evil One does not betray us we can sleep and eat and grow fat like bears in berry-time," he murmured, after examining the thicket from the inside to make sure we had left no broken twigs in entering.

I discovered I was very tired and also very hungry. We made a meal out of the bear meat Bolduc had thoughtfully brought along, and then I must examine the belt to make sure the Oneida had made no mistake. I fished it out of my shirt.

It was a new belt and made expressly to take advantage of the unrest caused in the Long House by the war, and to unite the Iroquois with the senders in warfare against the border in New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia. It was seven beads, or three inches, wide and nearly four feet long. Two axes in red were worked into the black background, standing for the Shawnees and Mingoes, who still smarted over the Pleasant Point battle on the Kanawha.

"It is a bad business," murmured Bolduc, as he stared at the belt. "M'sieur Whittlesey, there is much trouble in my heart."

As I did not speak he continued, after a slight pause:

"This bad belt. It must not be found. Why do we take it with us?"

"To show to Tryon County men so they will understand our danger."

"But yes. Then all Tryon County will know. Buzz, buzz, goes the talk about the black belt. And he who waits for it to come will know it will not come, and he will wait no longer. This is a very good place for a bad belt with two red axes. They say the forest mold keeps secrets a very long time. A seed sprouts and grows. Wampum beads keep under ground."

My pride, or vanity, opposed this ending of the adventure, but my respect for Bolduc's judgment was continually increasing. Our errand had been accomplished when we got possession of the belt. If caught while holding it our lives would be in great danger. We had violated an ancient custom. If Johnson Hall were waiting for the wampum to arrive to take to Canada, or leave at the Western Door, it might be better strategy to maintain the suspense. It would require time for the Shawnee delegates to return to their people and explain their loss. If the belt was never seen there would be created a distrust of the Iroquois. The mystery attending the disappearance of the belt in Iroquois territory would create a suspicion that the Long House had played the Ohio tribes false.

"You are a very wise man, Peter Bolduc," I finally said. "But if left here it must be securely hidden."

"*Bon!* Behold the trader dig a secret grave."

And he took his knife and carefully cut a sod from the forest mold and gently placed

it on his blanket. The small amount of black soil next removed was also deposited on the blanket. Then the belt was rolled compactly and deposited in the cavity and loose dirt placed over it. With the sod back in place it was impossible to detect any sign of his work.

"What dirt is left on my blanket will be dropped when we are some distance from here," he murmured as he put away his knife. "Now we can sleep."

As time was precious and we were well hidden we slept without standing watch and awoke after three hours of refreshing slumber.

The short curve of the river around the small meadow was all we could see over the tops of the bushes in the narrow lane. As far east as the eye traveled was the same wilderness roof. Of the river-trail we had left when we went into hiding there was not a trace. From the lowlands the thickly laced tree-tops swept up the hill and continued behind it until the Unadilla was reached. Beyond the Unadilla it was an unbroken stretch to Lake Erie, a noble roof for a mighty Long House and contained much that yet remained a mystery to white men.

So we focused our gaze on the bit of river, and after a while beheld a canoe containing two Indians. They were coming down-stream.

"—! *M'sieur!* So they were on our heels! Their red brothers are even now searching the unadilla. They passed up the river while we slept. They have their satisfy we were not ahead of them. Now there will be others searching the woods for us. I had the feeling, *m'sieur*, that some one was near."

"They haven't found the canoe."

"Not unless they found it since daylight. Well, we will tighten the belt and wait. *M'sieur* may sleep if he will."

I was in no mood for sleep. I was well accustomed to the forest, and now for the first time I sensed hostility in my wild surroundings. It would be simple for an Indian, or a capable white scout, to approach withing a few feet of our hiding-place without alarming us. If not for the slot left by the windfall we might as well have been at the bottom of a leafy well, so narrow was our field of vision. We stood watch with our ears rather than with our eyes.



BY THE middle of the afternoon the tedious work of waiting became intolerable. I expressed my belief that none of the Iroquois-trailers was in our neighborhood, and I insisted that we renew our journey.

When I finished my talk the trader courteously requested—

"If *m'sieur* would kindly gaze at the river."

I found my answer there. A canoe with five white men was paddling around the short bend. They were in view for a few minutes, and the distance was not so great as to prevent me from observing their heavy beards. I identified them as some of the Unadilla riff-raff, drunk the night before and now attempting to carry out Loyalist orders by seeking the stolen belt. Before they vanished one of them threw up his rifle and fired.

"Drink has shaken their nerves," chuckled Bolduc. "A bird hops in the bushes, a squirrel runs down a tree. *Boom!* *M'sieur* Rascal throws up his gun and shoots. We have little to fear from them, but we must wait and make sure the shot does not bring the red trackers back."

We waited an hour, and if any of the Indians came to investigate the shot we did not see them. From what the Oneida had said and from the appearance of the two Indians paddling down stream, I was convinced that almost all the Unadilla Indians had gone up the river of that name, or were busy scouting the forest between the two rivers.

None of the Shawnees would hunt for the belt either independently or in Iroquois company. It was not their place to do so. They would keep to their mats, and eat and smoke while their outraged hosts endeavored to undo the mischief. As the belt had been stolen somewhere between Oghwaga and the mouth of the Unadilla the crime had been committed well within the Long House, the treaty line of 1768 running due south almost to the northern boundary of Pennsylvania.

I believed the two Indians we saw descending the stream had left the river to strike across through what was called the Old England District to join their friends on the Unadilla, leaving the white men to patrol the Susquehanna. Bolduc reasoned the same, and sensibly suggested that our discovery by the Iroquois on the Unadilla

trail had led the Indians to believe we would retreat by that route.

Of course their suspicion that we had the belt could be based only on the fact that we were the only persons missing from Unadilla town.

"Peter Bolduc will reconnoiter," murmured the Frenchman.

While I prided myself on my woodcraft I was not silly enough to claim equality with the trader. His manner of slipping through the circle of thick bushes was a lesson even to one well versed in stealthy forest practices.

Lying flat on his stomach he began slowly worming his way out; and although I watched the top of the bushes I could not see that any moved. There was no sound that I could catch. Once his heels disappeared from view I could not tell by listening and watching whether he was motionless, or had completed his passage of the thicket.

I composed myself to wait, and after two hours passed I grew nervous. His return was dramatically silent. For as I was idly staring at his point of egress his head came into view. Then his shoulders were inside the opening. Resting on his elbows and appearing to flatten his body to half its natural thickness, he slowly drew himself clear, as one might emerge from a tight tunnel. Anyone standing on the other side of the barrier would not have suspected his presence. Carefully drawing his feet under him he ventured to breathe deeply; then murmured:

"—! Within a pistol shot of this place the red men came, then went back. There is nothing between us and the river. No one has passed up the trail beyond the bend. Two Indians followed it that far, then left and came in this direction. They must be the same who paddled down the river this morning. They landed below and scouted as far as the bend. They were out of hearing when the white fool fired his gun."

"And now?"

"If *m'sieur* be so kind we will make the most of the light. We will keep back from the river till we come opposite to Schenevas Creek. There we will call on Joachim Van Valkenberg and get a canoe. He is a very stout patriot. I believe we can paddle into Cherry Valley without being troubled."

"The five white men who went up the river?"

"*Poof!* Do white men who fire guns at squirrels catch young *m'sieur* or Bolduc the trader?"

I ached for action and room for stretching my long limbs. After examining our primings we set forth. The trader carried his blanket by the corners and as we drew away from the buried belt he permitted the loose dirt to filter out until he could roll the blanket and carry it properly. We kept to the hillside until it ran down into the levels. There were many trails crisscrossing the country and we had no difficulty in finding one that ran to Van Valkenberg's place.

At dusk we were on the farm, and Bolduc advised that I remain back while he went alone and procured some food and the loan of a canoe. Valkenberg would be pleased to help us, but it would aid us none if it were known he had inconvenienced the two white men suspected of stealing the war-belt. After securing a canoe we planned to make five miles to Matthew Cully's farm at the mouth of Cherry Valley Creek. Cully was a Cherry Valley man and a patriot. To no one would he divulge our business. To save time I told Bolduc to pick me up with the canoe above the clearing.

I skirted the farm and gained the river bank and waited. In a very short time the trader paddled through the dusk under the forest arch and took me aboard.

He brought bread, cheese, wild honey and a generous quantity of cooked meat. With such an abundance of provender it would not be necessary to accept Cully's hospitality. So we proposed passing the place and making a camp a mile beyond. But before we came in sight of any lights we heard loud and profane voices, as only white men sunk to a beastly level can carry on. When the woods gave way we beheld light showing through the small windows of the log house. The voices came from the house and we ventured to paddle around the point and into Cherry Valley Creek before landing.

We were lifting the canoe from the water when the sharp cry of a woman caused us to drop the canoe and snatch up our rifles.

Bolduc exclaimed:

"Name of the —! They make the trouble for madame, or *m'm'selle!*"

And he was scampering like a cat up muddy slope.

We ran noiselessly along a path that cut through a corner of the woods and ended in an Indian apple-orchard. The trees grew irregularly instead of in rows, and we had to watch sharp. Light streamed through an end window, and with this to guide us, we crossed the opening and peered within.

Two rough-looking fellows were seated at a home-made table and a woman was attempting to wait on them. My second glance recognized them as the two worthies, Bill and Joe, I had seen in Unadilla. In the woman's face was great mental agony. In one corner a girl of fourteen or fifteen was crouching on a bed, biting her fingers to keep back a scream, while her eyes rolled in terror.

As we looked in, the woman was placing a wooden platter of meat between the two men. And I saw her slyly appropriate a table-knife and hide it in the folds of her coarse gown.

"My man will be back any minute. He's a master hand at fighting," the woman told her unwelcome guests.

But her voice was shaky.

The men guffawed loudly at the threat. Bill taunted:

"He can't git by t'other three up the creek. If he does he'll git his weasan' slit for sartain."

"Our friends is combing the creek, ma'am, to l'arn if anyone has seen two skunks. They'll catch your man if he comes along," added Joe.

"And either of us is better'n your man is," said Bill. "We'll chaw him up at one mouthful. So if you hear him comin' and want him to die quick you just give another one of them hoots."

Mrs. Cully was praying that her husband would come in time to save the girl; she was afraid he would come and be murdered. I gently tried to push the Frenchman aside so I could use the double-barrel; for there was a wild light in the child's eyes I could not bear to see.

Bolduc's hand closed over mine and his lips at my ear whispered:

"The shots would be heard, *m'sieur*. There are three more near. Wait. It must be done quietly. Neither madame, nor *m'm'selle* is to be hurt."

Before I could reply that the child, if not her mother, was on the verge of losing her reason, Joe was saying:

"We've asked most perlite for some rum.

You've trotted out some cider—new cider. That sort of slop don't go for to make men like us feel kind'n gentle."

"There is a little rum," faltered the woman. "My man keeps it for snake bite. Rattlers is powerful thick from here to Yokum's—Valkenberg's. I'd minded to save it. But you're more'n welcome."

The Frenchman nudged me significantly to be watchful once the rascals had partaken of the strong drink. It was plain the two already were under the influence of liquor. Either would be evil enough without a dram.

The woman reached under the bed and pulled out a small jug and placed it on the table. As the two men wolfishly reached for it I saw her hand start to raise the knife, then drop back. I could not blame her for her indecision. At the best she could kill but one; then it would be all finished for her and her child.

Each minute was a menace to be staved off, and she was hoping the jug would afford her some advantage. As the two squabbled over the rum she turned to the girl and motioned for her to try to steal from the room. I believed the child could have made the door unnoticed, had she not made the mistake of trying to run. Instantly a long arm shot out to seize her by the shoulder and hurl her back.

"Wait'll you git leave 'fore you go moving round," roared Joe.

"Softly, Joe," cried Bill with drunken amiableness. "Wait'll you know whose property you're heavin' round. That question ain't been settled yet."

The other took a long pull at the jug and smashing a hairy paw on the table he fiercely announced:

"Then we'll settle it now. We've both got knives."

Bill began working his stool from the table as he repeated—

"Yes, we both got knives."

For the moment I entertained the hope the two were to close in a deadly duel. Bill must have had that in mind for he watched the other closely.

But Joe had meant something entirely different. Without noticing his companion's behavior he continued to explain:

"We'll heave knives for it. We'll heave at the big crack 'side the winder. You go first, Bill, seeing as you're keen to settle the business."



THE woman stole to the bed and began petting the child and whispering to her nervously. If she was planning another attempt to get the girl out of the house, Joe killed her hopes by pushing his stool against the door. Bill stepped back to the fireplace and pulled a heavy knife from his belt. For a few moments he stood with the knife half-raised, his legs unsteady, his friend laughing at him. Then he secured control of his drunken limbs long enough to bring back his hand over his shoulder and hurl the blade. We heard it *chunk* into the crack close to our window.

Turning to Joe he exulted:

"By —! If that ain't drillin' plumb center I don't know what is. Now I'm keen to see how well you can heave."

"Bill, you'll be losing your flint some day and be in a bad fix along of all your yowling," growled Joe, rising and drawing his knife. "Just take my place here to see no one runs away and I'll show you some real heaving."

"You can't beat my heave! It's plumb in the crack. That's what we was shootin' at," boasted Bill.

Joe gave him a vicious look and said:

"That talk makes bad friends. Your knife is in the crack, but this thing's got to be settled. Now there's the width of my blade between your knife and the winder. If I heave my knife into the crack and between your knife and the winder do I win?"

Bill stared at his own knife and fumbled at his empty belt. Joe was in an evil frame of mind. His manner of waving his blade back and forth as he talked had a disquieting effect on his friend. Bill heartily agreed:

"If you can do that, Joe, you win. But it'll be a — of a heave if you make it!"

Joe stepped to the table and tilted the jug. Bill grinned hopefully. But for the moment the liquor seemed to steady the man, and with none of the unsteadiness his companion had shown, he swung back to the fireplace. As his arm went up we drew aside. Then with a *swish* the heavy weapon passed through the open window and close to our heads. Bill's shriek of amusement was blended with Joe's roar of rage.

"A clean miss, by —!" yelled Bill.

Cursing horribly, Joe rushed to the window and thrust his head and shoulders across the sill to look for his knife.

With the quickness of a wolf Bolduc

grabbed him by the neck and yanked him through the opening and knifed him before he struck the ground. Before I could move it was ended and the body was drawn one side. And the trader was whispering—

"Wait!"

His scheme began to dawn on me as he brushed heavily against the logs and turned the corner to gain the door. Bill, by the door, was bent nearly double with laughter.

"That's prime!" he screamed. "What a hist'ry to tell the boys. Old Joe heaves his knife, then hisself, out the winder!"

I could hear my friend grumbling and groaning as he lurched against the door. I saw the door open a few inches, but Bill and his stool blocked it from swinging wide.

"Plumb out the winder he heaved hisself!" cried Bill.

"Open that door," gruffly ordered Bolduc, and he had caught Joe's voice so exactly that I involuntarily felt with my foot to locate the body.

Still howling with maudlin laughter Bill got to his feet and kicked the stool aside, and turned to shake his fist at the woman, who was frantically trying to arouse the girl to try to jump from the window.

"Joey, you're a master hand at heavin' a knife," gasped Bill as he opened the door and bowed mockingly.

The next moment his heels left the floor and he shot head-first from the room. I was around the corner in time to see him die even as Bolduc was lowering him to the ground.

"Tell the madame and *m'm'selle* it is all over," murmured the trader as he cleaned his knife by stabbing it into the ground.

When I stepped through the door Mrs. Cully was frantically trying to drag the girl to the window, and the latter was bleating and, like one gone crazy, was fighting to get back into the corner. There was an awful despair in the eyes raised to meet mine, and there was an awful determination in the half-raised knife. Then came bewilderment.

"You have nothing more to fear, Mrs. Cully. Both scoundrels are dead. My friend put them out of the way. He is Peter Bolduc, a trader among the Oneidas and Onondagas. Your husband knows him. I am Benajah Whittlesey from the Canajoharie district."

"You mean—you mean—" she gasped; and could say no more.

I led her to the bed and induced her to sit beside her daughter. Once more I explained she would never have anything to fear from Bill and Joe.

"You were in no danger from the time we reached the window," I added. "And that was before you gave them the jug."

"Then why did you let it go on?" she whimpered, suddenly breaking down and becoming as weak as she had been strong. "My girl is fair out of her wits."

"It mustn't be known it happened here. That's why we waited. Their friends might make it bad for you."

"The three up the river! Three of 'em! Desperately evil men. They was to come back here. Oh, God! They may come any time!"

Bolduc was bowing in the doorway. His voice, soft and musical, had an immediate effect on the two, especially on the young girl. He said:

"Madame, Peter Bolduc assures you there is no danger. If the others come what of it? *Pouff!* Madame may have heard of one, Long Gentry?"

He paused expectantly.

Her eyes dilated, and she slowly nodded her head. Bolduc pointed dramatically at me, and before I could stop him was announcing:

"Behold the young man who killed Long Gentry. He gave the villain's rifle to me. It is outside."

"It's true that Gentry and I had a fight and that he is dead," I hurriedly spoke up. "But we have work to do here. There are no signs of any violence in this cabin. My friend and I will remove what is outside. And do you take that knife from the wall and hide it."

Bolduc bowed low and, speaking as if begging a favor, said:

"If madame will give her *consentment* we will take the knife in the wall. For we wish to put them in their canoe with their knives and set them afloat. A few cuts and slashes in the bark and on the white ash rim-pieces will make their friends think they quarreled and fought each other. *Bon!* We will also deprive madame of the jug. It will be thought they quarreled while in drink."

"The other three men will come back while you are gone," she whispered as he plucked the knife from the logs.

"But we shall be gone only a minute.

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They can not come without us knowing it before they reach the clearing."

The girl stood up and slipped her hand into mine, and begged:

"Don't leave us alone. We'll go with you."

"But the work ahead isn't pretty for young girls to see," I lamely objected.

"Oh, I think it's very beautiful!" she cried. "I'm not scared of 'em when they're dead. I can't make it seem real, they're dead."

"Then, foot of a fox! Let *m'm'selle* come!" cried Bolduc.

And mother and daughter went along while we dragged the scoundrels down to the canoe and placed them in it, and slashed and cut the bark and rim-pieces and set them afloat. By degrees the girl became sufficiently composed to answer questions.

It was her mother's turn for weakness. She was weeping softly and could not talk. It was from the girl we learned that five men had been there to supper and had left their canoe to dry out while three of them proceeded up-stream in one of Cully's. Cully's absence undoubtedly saved him from being murdered. Now Mrs. Cully was heartbroken with fear lest he come to harm while returning home.

"Go and meet him!" she begged.

"Certain. One will go. M'sieur Whitteley will stay here," said Bolduc.

"No! I will go. You remain here, Peter Bolduc."


"You both must go," tearfully insisted the woman. "My daughter'n me will go to the edge of the woods and hide up. If the three men come they won't find me. Oh, I pray God that you come to no harm! That my man ain't come to no harm!"

Bolduc and I conferred aside, and agreed that the mother and child would be perfectly safe at the edge of the clearing. No number of drunken rascals could find them in the dark. They had neither Indians, nor wild animals to fear; only a certain breed of white men. I took the rifle from over the fireplace and reloaded it. Mrs. Cully took it and some blankets from the bed, and told her daughter to carry the ax. We saw them to a snug hiding-place just inside the woods and in view of the house.

As we went to the creek and got into our canoe I told the trader—

"Peter Bolduc, you are a quick man with a knife."

"It was a bad business, but necessary. M'sieur Whittlesey, never before have I struck when the man did not have a chance to fight back. But one can not be polite and remember the code when two women weep."

 THE creek was thick with snags and logs in places and, being as dark as a tunnel, we were compelled to feel our way slowly. Bolduc was the man for this sort of work, and at times I believed he had the eyes of a cat. Once I asked him how he knew when to turn aside to keep from running into the bank, and he replied that he could "feel the woods." At that, I felt the overhanging branches scraping my head more than once.

Two miles above Cully's we rounded a bend and quickly back-paddled to escape detection in the waves of light thrown off by a fire on the south bank. It was not a blaze an Indian would have kindled. Several voices raised in loud talk told us we had little to fear from sentinels.

We drew the canoe from the water under the overhanging boughs and paused to listen.

"The three men who came with Bill and Joe," I whispered.

He touched my arm for silence, then after a pause he corrected me:

"I count four voices, *m'sieur*. Either the three who went up the creek have met friends or it's another band of men."

We gained the top of the wooded bank and stepped into a trail that is always found in the wilderness along the course of every stream. We soon scouted to a position near the fire. Five men were seated around the big blaze. It had been a year since I had seen him, yet I recognized the fellow with the jug half-raised as my old enemy Newberry. He looked more wild and disheveled than when we fought in the river-road above the Martin place, but there was no mistaking him. He was saying:

"Just you folks wait. You're going to see — break loose down here mighty soon."

"What be we waiting for, Cap'n?" asked one of the Unadilla men.

"For Cap'n Brant. He may go to England to say 'how d'do' to the king. Then he'll come down here, and you'll see a wring that'll drive all the sniv'ling Boston men into the ocean."

Newberry's companion, a stranger to me, undersized and having ferret eyes in his wizened face, impatiently demanded:

"Do we have to wait for the Mohawk? Seems like white men didn't oughter have to wait for a Injun. Ain't we got a duty to do? Ain't there sneaking rebels that oughter be l'arned a lasting lesson?"

The Unadilla man laughed loudly and, after sampling the jug, assured him:

"Don't you fret, neighbor. There's prime Whig game mighty close at hand. Bill and Joe this minute is keeping watch on two rank rebels. Two women. Worst kind of rebels. I hold a woman is more dangerous than a man. They put men up to going against the king. So we left Bill'n Joe to watch 'em mighty close. They ain't more'n a quick paddle from here."

Newberry harshly demanded:

"Why didn't you tell that in the first place? 'Pears like you didn't want Cap'n Newberry to know nothing about it. Lucky for your hide the rum loosened your tongue."

The Unadilla men plainly stood in fear of my old acquaintance, for their leader earnestly protested:

"Cap'n, we never thought no such thing. We think one thing at a time. And there was that feller's case to settle. He's a rank rebel. After we settle his dish we'll finish the rum and go down where Bill and Joe is. It's his women folks we're talking about."

"Why didn't you say that at the start?" growled Newberry, reaching for the jug. "The place to settle his case is down where he lives."

From out of the shadows under the bank came a faint groan, and Bolduc and I pricked up our ears. It was our first intimation that the villains had a prisoner. The trader whispered:

"They have him! M'sieur Cully. He must be in one of the canoes."

The canoes were not in our line of vision because of the bank. Before we could confer on a plan to rescue the man, Newberry was on his feet, jug in one hand and rifle in the other, and making for the creek. Over his shoulder he ordered:

"Fetch along some pine torches. We'll finish the rum on the way down."

"Losing val'ble time listening to foolish chatter," complained the shrivel-faced man, nimbly following his leader.

The Unadilla men pulled burning brands from the fire and hurried down the bank. I held my rifle half-raised, in a quandary whether to open fire, or to wait until Cully's rescue would seem more assured.

Bolduc restrained me by whispering:

"Behold! The prisoner floats in his canoe behind the others. There's a rope made fast to the second canoe. M'sieur Cully is tightly tied. If we shoot and he is overturned he will drown in the darkness. The men from Unadilla are lighting the way."

The flaring torch made from the shore and only the second and third canoe were connected by a rope. The torch gained the middle of the creek and must have advanced too rapidly to suit Newberry, for we heard him profanely calling out for the Unadilla men to stop their — hurry.

Bolduc murmured:

"Come! It should all be very simple if *m'sieur* is good enough to agree with me."

He turned back into the shore path and we easily kept abreast of the torch now that the men were proceeding slowly. As he walked, the trader passed me his rifle, then his blouse. I bumped against him when he halted for a moment, and he gave me his Indian leggings. Now I was beginning to understand his plan. Turning and gripping my arm he whispered:

"The last canoe is almost in darkness. Wait for me with the rifles—three shots."

Before I could remonstrate and boast of my cleverness in the water he had slipped down the bank. I did not hear him take the water. I shifted my position to keep opposite Newberry's canoe. The Unadilla men began singing lustily. I could detect nothing of the Frenchman's attack. The first I knew of his proximity to the enemy was when Newberry yelled:

"— and —! We've hit something! Hold up, you fools ahead [there! We're filling with water!"]

The head canoe swerved slowly about. As the light moved up the river an Unadilla man excitedly howled:

"Your — rope's busted. Rebel's floating ashore!"

By aid of the advancing light I could now make out the last canoe, slowly floating toward my position. Newberry was yelling for the men to take him and his partner aboard before they got a ducking in the cold water. The Unadilla men were confused, one striving to paddle after the

prisoner, the other two endeavoring to rescue their new friends. Newberry gave vent to a terrific stream of curses, and roared:

"Come to me! Rebel can wait. He can't git loose. Hurry up!"

The canoe grounded below me. I could hear the Frenchman murmuring a warning to Cully. Then the two were slowly coming up the bank, and it sounded as if the trader was dragging the rescued prisoner.

The noise attracted the attention of one of the swearing men in midstream. Some one warned:

"That man's getting away! Hear him crawling up the bank!"

A rifle banged. I answered it with the Frenchman's gun. A man yelped shrilly, and the torch was tossed into the water and darkness rushed in. There came the sound of frantic paddling as I fired the double-barrel. Neither shot scored.



THE man Cully was scarcely able to stand, yet babbled wildly about running along the shore to his home.

Bolduc forcibly held him, although he was not able to walk at first except as he grabbed at the bushes for support, and made him to understand his wife and daughter were in no danger, that their captors were dead. Then I took a hand and declared the survivors of the band would not cease their flight until back in Unadilla.

Bolduc in turn added:

"The three shots told those men that three men had fired on them while a fourth man was swimming in the creek to cut you loose. They will never face four men. They run away. We know the breed. Somewhere down the river they may bump into a canoe holding two dead men—their friends. Then certain they will think the — is loose on the Cherry Valley Creek. *M'sieur*, here is your rifle, left in your canoe. We will go with *m'sieur* to the edge of his clearing, where he will find his wife and daughter. We earnestly advise him to take madame and *m'm'selle* to the Cherry Valley settlement. There will be no danger from Unadilla for a few days; then evil may creep up the river again."

Overwhelmed by his emotions, Cully could not make any reply. Walking unsteadily, he descended the bank to his canoe and set off. We loaded our rifles,

then found our canoe, embarked and followed him. I feared lest the rascals might expect pursuit and lay an ambush on the creek. Had they done so Cully would have run into it, for although we softly warned him to hold back and proceed cautiously, he displayed no cunning, but blundered ahead, in a sweat to rejoin his women folks. The five men, however, had had enough and had paddled rapidly, for we neither saw nor heard anything of them.

When we reached the edge of the Cully clearing the place was as silent as the grave. I told Cully:

"Follow up this side of the clearing. You should soon come to your women folks. Your wife has a rifle. Better call out your name. Bring them here and start at once with us up the creek. To-morrow you can return with friends and drive away your cattle."

"Oh, my ——!" groaned Cully. "What a mess. Right outer the blue sky! Who'd ever think such wicked things could happen! If ever I git a chance to pay you——"

A woman's voice stabbed through the darkness, frantically calling out:

"Matthew Cully! Is that Matthew Cully a-talking?"

Cully got up the bank and called for her to approach, that there was no danger. The trader said:

"Make our most respectful compliments to madame and *m'm'selle*, and tell them you start at once for the settlement. But you'll be safe in stopping long enough to pack up whatever you can bring away in your canoe."

"I'll stop for nothing," Cully shouted back. "We'll be paddling up the creek inside of five seconds."

So it was Bolduc and I who entered the house, and rolled up bedding and what few articles they could transport in their canoe and brought them to the stream.

The united family was more composed when we returned, and Mrs. Cully embarrassed us by her attempts to thank us. The young girl found my hand and clung to it, and I soon discovered she was anchored to the trader in a similar fashion. Nor did she utter a word. The shock had left her tongueless. Mrs. Cully, sobbing and exulting by turns, in a broken recital told us how she heard the five men yell out in great alarm when they came to the canoe containing the two dead men. She knew

what they had found by their few wild words.

"They seemed to reckon the two had fit with knives, but they couldn't make out how the one knifed in the back could 'a' killed t'other one, or how t'other, after being stabbed could 'a' killed the one through the back," she told us.

We had Cully paddle ahead, and we accommodated our pace to his. Cully gave out at the end of a mile and his wife was for taking his place, but the girl reminded them—

"The Burrows cabin is right along here."

These were the first sane words she had uttered.

We soon drew up to the Burrows farm and were greeted by the fierce barking of several dogs—excellent sentinels in a pioneer country. A man called out from the dark cabin, demanding to know our business and coupled to the demand a threat to shoot. Cully gave his name and asked shelter, but the door did not open until he had advanced and the dogs refused to worry him.

Then the inmates of the cabin knew he must be a friend and opened the door. After he had been recognized, the family, consisting of the Burrows, their two sons and work-hand, streamed down to the canoes and insisted we enter and spend the night. But while Cully was striving to give a coherent account of his adventures, Bolduc gently pushed off and we stole away through the blackness before they discovered we had gone.

"It has been a very warm night, M'sieur Whittlesey, for the season of the year," murmured Bolduc as we felt our way up the creek.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HOMEWARD PATH

THE first Cherry Valley settlers came from Londonderry, New Hampshire, and were a sturdy, resolute people. The settlement was included in the Canajoharie district and several of the men were members of our Tryon County Committee of Safety. The Scotch Presbyterian members were so strict in adhering to their religious views as to object to any committee meetings being held on the Sabbath.

Gideon Hawlry, a missionary, penetrated as far as the valley when he endeavored to establish a school at Oghwaga

and was prevented by the French war. John Lindesay obtained a patent to the valley in 1738 and formed a settlement called "Lindesay's Bush."

The first road from the Mohawk to the Susquehanna began at Canajoharie and ran through the valley, and had been in existence thirty-five years when Bolduc and I left our canoe on the bank a few hours after sunrise. A much more recent road was that cut through the forest to Catskill on the Hudson, passing through Cobleskill and Schoharie. There were rough thoroughfares also from Cherry Valley westward to Springfield and south to Middlefield. But it was over the old Mohawk road that Connecticut men brought their families down to the Susquehanna and to the beautiful Wyoming Valley before the Revolution.

Some sixty families composed the settlement we were approaching, with as many more scattered up and down the valley. It was my first visit. Naturally I wondered if Nancy Martin and her father were still there. They had had plenty of time to move away since I received the girl's first and last letter. Bolduc suggested we look them up at the Wells home and incidentally procure our breakfast. We were free to stop at any cabin and accept hospitality, but somehow I felt diffident.

When the trader suggested we call on John Moore, a very valuable member of our committee, and who would have been active in military affairs if not for his lameness, I had to object if I would be consistent so I countered with the proposal we be self-sustaining. We ate the fragments of our bread and cooked meat by the side of the creek.

Walking along the rough road we exchanged greetings with a weaver, who was using standing trees as supports for his loom. Bolduc informed me this settler also worked as a surveyor, carpenter, stone-mason, blacksmith, millwright, and "did a little preaching." Thus it was with the bulk of our pioneers, competent through necessity to do many things and do them well.

A short distance above the weaver's home was the Reverend Samuel Dunlop's school. My gaze quickened as I beheld a slim girl standing at one side and watching the youngsters file in. Clinging to her hand was a child of ten or twelve, stunted in growth, and with the hunger-look in his face—one of the greatest of all tragedies.

He was greedily munching a cake and, as we approached, the girl, without looking down, produced another cake from her pocket and gave it to him.

I halted, yet positive I could not be mistaken. Then she turned and after a sharp glance was running to me, her hands outstretched.

"Big Brother of the Wolf!" she cried, seizing my hands and shaking them fiercely.

"Miss Nancy, this is Peter Bolduc, the trader," I began; but she cut in—

"Monsieur Bolduc has been at our home."

"*M'm'selle*, the Little Seneca, I make my compliments," he murmured, bowing low over her hand and then stepping back that we might talk.

Question was piled on question, mine often clashing with hers. She was sad to hear of my uncle's death—I did not tell her he was murdered. Her father was well and still complaining at the lack of English tea. They had left the hospitable Wells family and had a cabin of their own.

"You are not going to school?" I asked,

"I hear some of the lessons to help Mr. Dunlop out."

Then as the child tugged at her hand:

"Little pig! This is the last cake."

And she dipped into her pocket and set him to munching. The child stared at me gravely as he ate, and she explained:

"He is my son. I am a very old Indian woman and have lost my son. So I have adopted him. Of course he takes my clan and is a Wolf."

"His name is Big Paws," solemnly declared the youngster.

Brushing the crumbs from his mouth, she sent him trotting into the building and then told me, in a sad little voice:

"A poor bound-boy. He's been used badly. Always hungry. Think of it! A little child not having enough to eat! And made to work when so little! I'm trying to teach him to read and write, but he is backward."

"And you're his little mother—a little red mother."

"I'm a white girl since I left the valley. To play we're Senecas is a game that pleases him. And poor little Big Paws hasn't had much to make him happy."

She winked back any signs of weakness and abruptly asked—

"You've been to Unadilla and now are going home?"

I had told her nothing of the tragedy down the river, nor of my errand to Unadilla. This left her to believe I was merely roaming about the country.

"I'm making for home, if I can call it that now my uncle is dead."

"You're quite a wanderer. You've gone around in a big circle. Now you're near the Mohawk Valley. It can't be more'n twelve miles."

I caught the rebuke and greatly regretted I had not looked her and her father up before. But I never was good at making explanations. She looked much the same, surely no larger than when I saw her for the last time in our valley. Yet there was a new quality in her face, perhaps the responsibility of looking after her father. It was plain she was turning her Albany schooling to good account and was supporting the two of them. This realization inspired me to offer eagerly:

"I have it! You and your father must go back with me to the valley. There is the house and farm. You shall be mistress. I can't live on there alone."

Her small face filled with color as she replied:

"Oh, we can't leave this place. I have my work here. My son would miss me."

"There's work to be done there. I'll hunt up the man the child's bound out to and make a trade to take him with us."

I think the thought of helping little Big Paws tempted her strongly, but when she spoke, it was only to say:

"You speak as a big brother Wolf should speak. I thank my clan-brother. But I must stay here."

I was much disappointed. There was no sense in her refusal that I could see.

"I'm no Wolf," I grumbled. "I've made a perfectly reasonable proposition; rather a selfish one, I know. So there's no thanks due me. Entirely the other way. Of course I should expect to pay you for running the house."

Again the color flamed in her face and I could imagine she resembled her mother. But the voice was white as she gently protested:

"No, no! You're kind; but my place is here. My father would be of no help. It's time for me to go in."

"Continue to listen, for the smoke still arises," I pleaded, using the ancient speech of the Iroquois in invoking the aid of

Heno with burning tobacco, and pointing to the Frenchman's pipe, now sending up blue smoke.

But she frowned on this as if it were a sacrilege and hurriedly said:

"We shall see you before you go away, of course. My father will be pleased to see you. Third cabin on the right. *Bonjour*, Monsieur Bolduc."

"*Bonjour*, M'm'selle Petite Seneca," he gaily called back; and he won what I had been unable to do, a show of the elusive dimples.

As he walked up the road the trader observed:

"She is a very remarkable young woman. She is very wise in the head. She earns the keep of her father and herself."

"She's a child," I corrected, frowning at the fact she was assuming Mr. Martin's responsibilities. "This is the place."

Had it been any other cabin I would have pulled the latchstring and walked in. But I knew the last of the macaronis and his habits and paused to bang my knuckles on the door.

"In just a minute!" called out the familiar voice. "Curses on a piece of lace that will tear itself!"

There followed the sound of him bustling around, and then the door opened, and my old friend was bowing and mincing. He was wearing the silk-striped breeches, and my gaze was anxious as I furtively took stock of them and found them much tarnished, and weak at the seams. The outstretched hand, resting on the top of the cane, trembled a bit, but his whole appearance was very reminiscent of the Mohawk days and made me feel very young. On recognizing me, which he failed to do for a moment because of the stubble on my thin face, he forgot deportment and eagerly flung an arm about my neck and begged me to enter. Not until we were inside did he remember to greet Peter Bolduc properly.



THE cabin was originally one large room, but was now divided into three rooms by curtains of calico. It was scrupulously neat and my fingers itched to handle the books on the home-made shelves. I permitted him to believe that my uncle had died of natural causes, and, as there had never been any comradeship between them, he expressed proper sympathy and promptly shifted to a tirade against the war.

"Blaze me, lad!" he began in his old manner. "Horry Martin can't become enthusiastic over anything that cramps his life. Not an ounce of tea since I came here! You look incredulous. It's — truth. I've actually jumped from pan to fire. Not a drop of tea at the Wells house. I'll admit they were most kind and that there was an abundance of other things. It wasn't Horry Martin's notion, this shifting to this cabin. I told Nance how it would be, but she would have it so. We must have our own house and earn our own keep, says she. And here we are, down to succotash and what game that's given us. Nothing but what we earn, says she. Earn? Good —! How can Horry Martin, the last of the macaronis, earn anything in this desolate spot? —, lad! I've reasoned with that child harder than ever I worked to set a new mode. But she won't hear me."

"*Vive la Nancel*!" murmured the trader. Then politely in English—

"Not hear of what, *m'sieur*?"

"Of our going to New York where I might pick up a pretty penny teaching the punctillios of deportment. Could a wood-chopper earn his keep in New York? Ha! Then how can Horry Martin, the last of the great beaux, earn a living in this raw country? It's unfair and unjust."

"Miss Nancy is working," I reminded.

"Oh, aye. She's doing well enough. Scrubbing dirty faces and teaching pot-hooks to children. I would be willing to interest the older lads and misses in the polite literature." And he waved a thin hand toward the books.

"But," he continued, "there's only two phases of life here: Brief childhood and manhood. When a boy is twelve he calls himself a fort-soldier, and is allowed to aim and shoot a cursed gun. The courtesies talents are ignored. There is absolutely no graceful development. No niceties are desired, such as the art of crossing a ball-room floor and the retrieving of my lady's handkerchief. No aplomb in opening a door for a lady! Faugh! it's all as coarse and raw as those logs outside which a few days ago were graceful trees."

"They practise running to some one house selected for defense against the Indians," murmured Bolduc. "Certain. Then the ladies and children are permitted to enter first?"

"Oh, aye. They're keen enough on

looking after their own," grumbled Mr. Martin. "But there is no life. No sparkle. They would as soon think of talking of Cathay as of dress. I'm fond of the table, but it never helps my appetite to wander among butcher stalls and look on raw meat. This sort of life must be necessary for the life of the next generation, but I do not relish it. I am used to something far different, Monsieur Bolduc. I only enjoy meat when it's properly cooked, and fruit juice only after it is properly aged. Curse misfortune, lad! But I wish I were back on the Mohawk!"

I knew he would jump at the chance of returning to our valley and living in my home. But I knew the girl would not forgive me if I repeated the offer to him. To cover the gap caused by his remaining gloomily silent, I remarked—

"Miss Nancy has rare pride, sir."

"Oh, aye. Pride enough," he mumbled. "Only I never can tell if it's red or white pride. It's silly the way she plays Injun with that bound-boy of Lesker's. Man of no refinement. Wouldn't treat an own child well, of course. We should allow for his ignorance. But Nance seems to think it's unusual. Actually broods over it! Always has a cake in her pocket for him. Always playing she's an old Seneca woman who's lost a son."

"Miss Nancy is very sensible and thoroughly white," I told him.

"Polite of you, Benajah, lad," he murmured. "To be expected, of course, if only to keep in practise. She's a good girl. But this is no country for Horry Martin. I'm not understood. Now my nature demands tea. A Tryon County man brought in a small package of tea. Nance came home from her school and found it on the shelf. I even had the pewter pot out, so she knew I was waiting for it. Threw it into the fire. It's fact. Now what harm could it do the Americans in this cursed war if I'd drank it instead of her burning it? Surely it never could take a man or a gun from Mr. Washington's army."

"General Washington," I corrected.

"I daresay. I can't keep up with the war news. McDonald says we're paying too big a price for going without our tea. Sounded sensible."

"McDonald! —!" shrilly exclaimed Bolduc.

"What McDonald is it you speak of?" I eagerly demanded, my thoughts darting

back to Johnstown, the jail and my rescue by the girl and Joseph Brant.

"The one who brought me the tea," he explained, his voice becoming irritable. "You have a way of snapping a person up, Benajah, when that person is your elder——"

"The man's full name, *m'sieur!*" harshly broke in the Frenchman.

"Blaze me, but you both have caught the manners of the forest! Donald McDonald. A fine, upstanding sort of a man. A man who understands that my nature is——"

"I know him," interrupted Bolduc, with a wink for me to keep silent. "He has worked for Sir John at Johnson Hall. He has done much business for Sir John. But I thought he was in Canada."

"Aye. Belike. But Sir William was the only one of the tribe worth cultivating. He recognized the difference between a sensitive and a coarse nature. He might give raw rum to a workman or a Mohawk, but always wine when Horry Martin paid his respects. I fear his cellar has been sadly dispersed."

"A good man. Certain. Always in my high respect," declared Bolduc. "But Sir John's man. He must have known you were here to bring you tea, *m'sieur.*"

"Horry Martin is remembered by many men, I assume," was the haughty reply. "I know nothing beyond that he called and was very decent in giving me the tea. I now remember he asked me to say nothing about it. Seems to be some silly belief among the settlers that we shall whip the king if we abstain from tea. ——, if it doesn't sound illogical!"

"Certain. M'sieur McDonald was very glad to see you, M'sieur Martin. You were such old friends."

Mr. Martin shook his head slowly, and honestly replied:

"Why, scarcely that. In truth, I think I misjudged him in the past. There was something about Benajah's being hailed to Johnstown that he appeared to countenance. I remember it displeased me at the time. I was frank to tell him as much. But he explained he was only doing his duty—very disagreeable duty. He was very glad the affair ended almost before it began. After we had talked a bit I could see he was a very proper man."

I began to perceive the Frenchman was seeking to learn McDonald's purpose in

cultivating the Martins' friendship. Placing aside my anger against the Highlander I seconded the trader's efforts by carelessly remarking—

"Of course he inquired about me and other old friends of yours in the valley?"

"Blaze me, lad! No. He had no more curiosity than a tree. It was Horry Martin who sought news, and got precious little. If Nancy were a few years older I would say McDonald seeks her company. He's very keen to talk with her."

"M'sieur McDonald always takes a great interest in the Iroquois," said the trader; and again he had found the Highlander's trail. For Mr. Martin querulously replied:

"It's a weak spot in his make-up. With the art of dressing going to smash because of this war he seemed to care to talk of nothing but Indians. He knows nothing about the Indians. His questions wearied the child. Why, she was scarcely civil to him. There she sat in that corner like a sullen young wildcat, speaking but little when he questioned her, and even then talking in Seneca. At other times she can be red enough, with her foolishness about being an old Seneca mother adopting a new son.

"But when a man brings her poor old father a gift and can't get a word in English from her when he tries to learn something about her mother's people, she could be white. Nancy's a queer piece. Wouldn't answer a simple question when all she had to say was 'yes' or 'no.'"

"*M'm'selle* is so amiable! It seems impossible," murmured the Frenchman. "Not answer a simple question? Foot of a fox!"

Mr. Martin enjoyed pitying himself, and went on—

"She was quick enough to burn the bit of tea he brought me, but she wouldn't even tell him if any Iroquois had come from Unadilla to this forsaken place."

"*M'm'selle* remembers M'sieur Whittlesey's trip to the Johnstown jail. She is very loyal to her friends. But not to tell the man if an Indian had come from Unadilla! *Eh, bien!* A girl is a woman, waiting to grow up. They perplex. But, *m'sieur*, the Scotchman, could easily get his answer from any of the settlers."

"So I told him. He said the settlers couldn't tell one Indian from another as to the tribe. He knows Nancy can talk with

any of them. I think he was particular to learn if a strange Seneca had been here. He asked something like that."

"Where's McDonald now?" I inquired.

"I do not know. The tea's burned. I've lost all interest. He was in the settlement last night. I saw him talking with Lesker. Small welcome he and his tea got here!" And he laughed bitterly.

We talked a bit further and left him. Once outside the trader murmured:

"Johnson Hall is impatient to hear news of the black belt. McDonald comes as a trusty messenger. The belt was to be delivered into his hands here at Cherry Valley. For some reason he doesn't care to go on to Tunadilla."



WE WALKED to the ridge north of the village and stood on its crest. To the northward stretched the valley of the Canajoharie. A streak of white mist along the distant hills marked the course of the Mohawk. It seemed a long time ago since I started out to find my uncle. Years had been compressed into days. I had become acquainted with death through violence. It seemed impossible, as I stared north through the Autumn haze, that so brief a time had elapsed since the shadows fell.

Bolduc interrupted my meditations by saying:

"It's time we hunted up the Scotchman. He came here to meet a certain Seneca. He questions our little friend when her foolish father can't give the information. He is not popular here and his business is pressing. He does not care to go to Tunadilla. *Bient*! He can be driven from this valley before a white man comes and tells of the lost belt."

This was a program to my liking. As we descended the ridge I remarked:

"If he knew of the cipher writing hidden in my patch-box, he might think his business was more pressing. We'll find him and cook his dish."

"Peaceful! Peaceful!" softly restrained Bolduc. "We go back to say adieu to *m'm'selle* and *m'sieur*. We meet McDonald by accident. Then we will see what comes of that meeting."

"He put me in jail. There are enough members of the Committee of Safety here to put him in jail."

"Softly! Gently. We will see."

So we walked back to the settlement and saw the weaver still busy between his four trees. After we passed the school, the children came out, whooping and running, eager to eat the noonday meal and yet having time to play. Little boys hid in ambush and little girls shrieked and played at being afraid. Samuel Dunlop, founder of the school, walked slowly up the irregular street. Nancy Martin and her son, little Big Paws, were the last to come out. The child was still clinging to her hand.

We were below the weaver's house and it chanced she did not see us. As we started to overtake her, McDonald suddenly appeared from behind the school-building and walked beside her. But she did not propose to enjoy his company, for she came to a halt. He stood with his back to us and as we approached we heard him say:

"You're part Injun. You know if any Onondagas or Senecas have been here within a few days. I want an answer."

"I do not spy on the Iroquois. They're free to come and go as they will."

"I ain't asking you to spy. They'll take it kindly if you tell me. I'm a good friend to them."

"Then go back in the woods a mile east of here and you'll find three Oneida men in camp. They'll tell a friend anything."

"— the Oneidas!" he growled.

"My son isn't to hear any such talk!"

"Forgit that silly business. You and your son! I'll tell Lesker he'd better take the boy away unless you tell me if any Senecas, Onondagas or white men, have come here from Unadilla within a few days."

His threat made her very angry, and there was something appropriate to her father's likening her to a wildcat. Then she discovered us and an expression of amusement softened her small features, and she told him:

"I will answer that. The two men behind you arrived from Unadilla this morning."

McDonald wheeled about, his heavy face lighted with expectancy. On recognizing Bolduc and me his lips formed a curse. Miss Nancy hurried with the boy toward her cabin. For a bit the Highlander was nonplused and could only glare at us.

Bolduc graciously greeted him:

"*Bonjour, m'sieur*. A warm day for so late in the season. What news do you bring from the Mohawk?"

McDonald recovered from his surprise and slowly answered:

"I have no news. The valley is quiet. The Martin girl tells me you two have come from the south."

"From Tunadilla," readily replied the trader.

"Then you should be the ones to have news."

"The grist-mill will grind only white corn. The Indians planted but little. No new settlers are coming in, and the saw-mill man despairs of trade till times are better."

"That's not news," growled McDonald. "Why can't we talk even if we don't think alike?"

"Certain. And why not? There are some white villains flocking into Tunadilla. The Oneidas do not like them. I saw no Mohawks, but some are there."

"Some are saying the Unadilla Indians have invited the Shawnees and Delawares to come and live with them."

This was a silly thing to say to a man who knew the Indians as did Peter Bolduc. But he appeared to accept it as might any settler who did not understand the red man. It was on my tongue to remind the Highlander that the Shawnees and their grandfathers did not need to beg mats from any nation. Bolduc, with an air of great simplicity, replied:

"I have not heard that. It is true some Shawnee men have arrived at Tunadilla from Oghwaga. They probably came to Oghwaga to trade, and, finding trade dead, came up the river to visit the Tunadilla men. But I do not think they will care to stop there. They have better hunting, it is said, on the Scioto."

McDonald believed he was at last obtaining the information he sought. His eyes showed that much. And there was eagerness in his voice when he asked—

"Did they hold a council with the Unadilla Indians?"

"They were making a feast when we came away. I know nothing about a council, *m'sieur*. But when red men burn tobacco and have a feast they usually exchange wampum."

McDonald was highly pleased. Ignorant of the cipher message in our possession he could not suspect that we knew the business of the visiting Shawnees. Having obtained all the information he could he believed he

could indulge his resentment. Turning to me he remarked—

"The last time I saw you on the Mohawk you were in trouble."

"In trouble; and suffering for a drink of water. The last time I saw you, McDonald, you were slinking away like a whipped dog and Joseph Brant was telling the people of Johnstown that I carried his road-belts. Sir John was remaining close to Johnson Hall about that time."

"A whipped dog, eh?" he gritted. "We'll remember that, young bantam. A notch in each ear for each word."

"Now?"

And I leaned my rifle against the schoolhouse.

He laughed grimly and frankly reminded me—

"This is a poor place for a king's man to start a quarrel, Whittlesey."

"*M'sieur* forgets we only have to repeat *m'sieur's* words to have him surrounded by angry men," softly warned the trader.

"But you won't say a word. That would look as if Whittlesey couldn't fight his own battles. As for Brant's road-belts they were good only in times of peace. Times have changed since Cap'n Brant talked in front of the Johnstown jail. But there is a belt for you, young bantam, that'll clear all the briars and brambles from your path straight down to——!"

I had made up my mind when he threatened to notch my ears. I told him:

"You ran away to Canada with Guy Johnson and Brant. You're back by stealth. As a member of the Tryon County Committee of Safety it's my duty to see you where you once placed me—in gaol."

And I made the mistake of reaching for my rifle.

Instantly he had Bolduc by the shoulder and had hurled him against me, and the two of us tumbled to the ground, a rare confusion of legs and arms and guns. By the time we had disentangled ourselves and had regained our feet the Highlander was gone.

Inarticulate with rage the trader ran back of the building while I ran down the road by the weaver's house. The crack of a rifle halted my blind chase and I turned back to behold the trader slowly coming from behind the schoolhouse.

Before I could question him he made a gesture of disgust and said:

"But a glimpse as he took cover in the forest. I missed him."

"Lead the way! We'll trail him," I wrathfully urged.

But Bolduc was something of a philosopher. He shook his head and replied: "Why tire the leg in chasing him? He's making down the valley for Tunadilla. When we find him he may have too many friends for us to entertain. Behold! The good people gather. We must explain."



SOME two dozen men and women and a scattering of children were pouring from the houses and closing around us to learn why we had disturbed the peace. They were afraid it might be an Indian alarm, for nearly all the men carried guns and several of the women had snatched up long-handled axes and hatchets.

I briefly explained the cause of the shot and my reasons for attempting to take McDonald into custody. On learning I was a member of the Tryon County Committee, and that David Whittlesey was my uncle, each household insisted on entertaining the two of us. Many complained because we had not asked ourselves into their homes.

John Moore came up, his lameness delaying him. He at once took charge of the situation and rapidly detailed a scouting party of ten to scour the woods to the east and ordered another band down the creek to intercept the fugitive if he attempted to make the Unadilla. To me he sternly said:

"You've taken too much on yourself, Mr. Whittlesey. Knowing the man was *the* MacDonald who fled with Guy Johnson you neglected your duty in not passing the word so he could be laid by the heels at once. Because he was a neighbor of yours should not have counted. Your uncle will agree with me that you have failed."

"I owe McDonald nothing but ill-will," I told him. "My uncle is dead."

The settlers were much affected by this news. I could not talk about it, and it was Bolduc who graphically described Long Gentry's crime and the price he paid. Mr. Moore was all sympathy and acted very handsomely.

"If you had only come to me this morning," he lamented. "Then I should have been prepared and this McDonald would now be inside four log walls."

With the departure of the scouting parties the settlers slowly dispersed to finish their

dinners. I discovered Nancy Martin watching the proceedings from the front of her cabin. Bolduc was telling Moore:

"McDonald may turn north and strike for the Mohawk. My young friend and I walk that way. We may pick him up."

"Good! The quicker you start the sooner you may catch the rascal."

To me the trader said:

"Shall we proceed with our journey, *m'sieur*? There may be a villain ahead of us; and it is time Peter Bolduc was back at his trading-post on the Oneida. There are goods to be hidden."

"Why do you leave the lake, Bolduc?" asked Moore. "The Oneidas and the Onondagas are your friends."

"There will be no more trade on Oneida Lake," was the sorrowful reply. "The world for me is upside down. Never again can Peter Bolduc find peace and a home inside the Long House. An English king and his unruly children in America will tear the Long House down before they stop their quarrel."

"Come here and live with us," urged Moore. "There's a home here for you and a chance to trade. Sometime we'll have peace, God willing."

"My father owed a debt to England, and his father before him, and his father before him. It's a very old debt, *m'sieur*. It began at Crécy. It is for Peter Bolduc to pay a little on account."

"You will fight?"

"—! What else, *m'sieur*? Would *m'sieur*—no! no! That is impossible. *M'sieur* would not have the heart to insult."

"Good heavens, man! Of course not. Ah, if I only had two sound feet and legs!"

The Martin girl was turning as if to enter her cabin. I broke in—

"We must be going."

Bolduc clapped his hand on my shoulder and his dark eyes sparkled as he noted the direction of my gaze.

"Certain! *Poof!* Away we go. But gently; *m'm'selle* walks slowly, like one who thinks she will be overtaken. Make my compliments to her. On top of the ridge looking down into the valley of the Canajoharie I shall smoke a pipe to Heno. Maybe my young friend will find me there."

We shook hands with John Moore; then Bolduc darted between two cabins, and I hurried on to overtake Miss Nancy. The Frenchman's words had decided me.

"About that farmhouse on the Mohawk, Little Sister of the Wolf. You will change your mind and come?"

"Big Brother of the Wolf, Newataquaah can not live in another's house," she lightly replied.

"Nancy, you talk like a nuisance. I'll get the bound-boy from Lesker. Take him and your father, and go up there and look after the place."

She glanced up quickly and questioned:

"You mean you're not to be there?"

"I shall enlist as soon as I get home. Now will you come?"

"As if you must go away to war before I would come," she rebuked me. "You're kind, but it would be very lonesome. A strange house. No work to keep me busy."

Then with a return of her selfish spirit, she added:

"And little Big Paws will be happier down here. Mr. Moore has promised to get him away from Lesker so he can live with his old mother."

I had known it would be that way.

"Then it's good-by. You're surrounded by friends. No harm can touch you here. I wish I could be as sure of the Mohawk Valley. They say Brant and Walter Butler have nine hundred Indians ready to sweep down the valley."

"Not yet," she corrected. "It may come but not this year, nor next. I have talked with men of my mother's people. They have told me things they will not tell Sir John Johnson, nor Guy Johnson. They have not danced themselves up to the war-pitch yet. Thayendanegea goes to England before the New Year. He will be there all Winter. On the Mohawk, or in Cherry Valley, my father and I are safe no matter what happens. But that doesn't make me happy. It's like you, Benajah, to offer us a home. It's like you not to speak of it to my father and cause me trouble."

I thought of the beasts licking their wounds at Unadilla and still wondering why their two mates killed each other in a canoe.

"Look out for white renegades," I warned her. "We saved an Oneida woman from one at Unadilla. I shall report to the Committee of Safety and then enlist. Sir John will find himself in trouble. Perhaps in the same jail where you found me."

"Mr. Moore says Sir John wrote a letter to the committee, denying he ever forbid

his tenants enlisting in our army. But he says he will lose his head before he joins the committee. He doesn't seem to be afraid."

"He will be afraid. Peter Bolduc is waiting for me on the ridge. We must stop McDonald from reaching the Mohawk ahead of us. Sir John knows none of his tenants will enlist: So that much means nothing. I'll say good-by to your father—"

"He sleeps. Wait till I go ahead. He will not be seen without his coat."

"Then say I left a 'good-by' for him. Beware of white renegades. Good-by, Little Sister of the Wolf."

"Good-by to you, Big Brother. I shall burn tobacco to Hawenneyu to keep your path straight and to frighten Hanegoategeh, the Evil-Minded, from your road."

On the ridge, staring northwest in the direction of Oneida Lake, stood Peter Bolduc.

"It's a very beautiful country, *m'sieur*," he muttered as I stood beside him.

And he kept his gaze averted as if to conceal some signs of weakness. "But, foot of a fox! what can one expect when a pig of a king sits on a throne?"



NIGHT was bending over the valley when I arrived home. The last few miles under a sullen sky had filled me with great reluctance. I could not bring myself to visit the farm and enter the house alone at such a gloomy hour. I turned in at Vischer's place. The wind was keening through the bare branches of the few shade-trees in front of the long, low house. I suddenly realized I no longer had a home. There was a stout farmhouse and some fair acres, but the warm heart was dead, and home was dead.

A figure emerged from the darkness, and a familiar voice called out—

"Who's that?"

I gave my name, and Herbert Vischer was throwing his arms about my neck and was excitedly bawling my name.

"Land of Goshen, Benajah Whittlesey!" he babbled after bobbing lights and the banging of a kitchen door rewarded his shouts, and a lane of candlelight stabbed across the yard.

"What doings! Gone and killed Long Gentry! Oh, your poor uncle! Such a proper man. Gruff perhaps at times, but such a proper man. Every day's seemed a

week since you went away and left me to care for the stock."

I could have told him each day had been a year to me, but now his folks and a hired hand were bearing down upon us, finding my free hand in the darkness and shaking it warmly. The genuineness of their welcome made me weak. I began to explain my desire to stay the night with them. Mrs. Vischer cut me short by declaring that anything else would be rank treachery to the family and the entire valley.

"You can't go back there till the bedding's well aired. I'll go over tomorrow and rid the place up."

Her motherly kindness permitted me to get a grip on myself by the time we were seated in the radiance of the roaring hearth-fire. Supper was eaten and the table cleared with few words spoken. But once we resumed our places around the fire the questions came thick and fast. For two hours they hungrily plied me to give more details, until one would think I had traveled around the world and had been gone years.

"You saw nothing of McDonald for the good reason he ain't come back here," said Mr. Vischer, when the half-circle paused for breath.

I produced the cipher writing and wrote out a translation and gave it to him, and directed:

"I shall be going away in the morning. Give these to the committee."

"They'll cook Sir John's goose!" cried Herbert. "And to think you got that belt!"

Mr. Vischer was more deliberate in his judgment.

"There's no doubt that Sir John ought to be locked up in Albany," he told us. "But this cipher isn't in writing. If he denies, we can't prove he sent it. As for the belt, you had to hide it. In stopping the belt you did a great service, Benajah. But so far as Sir John is concerned we can't, legally, hold him on the evidence you give. The committee will believe he wrote the message, that the belt was to be fetched to Johnson Hall. But we can't lock him up on 'belief.'"

"Goodness, father! You mean all Benajah's done will go for nothing?" sharply demanded Mrs. Vischer.

"Not a bit. We'll watch him closer. We'll urge Albany to arrest him as a suspicious person. We'll make him give his parole. It don't make much difference

whether he stays at the Hall or in Albany. He'll be bottled up in the valley—a prisoner."

Herbert was skeptical and grumbled:

"Huh! Prisoner and not in jail. He'll be found missing some fine morning, and there'll be another of his family in Canada."

His father rebuked him for contradicting his elders, and yet the boy was a true prophet. When the time came for Sir John to take his medicine he would flee north by the way of the Sacandaga, taking white and red Indians with him. Only we could not foresee that flight as we sat there and heard the wind howling in the chimney.

Mr. Vischer returned to my declared purpose of enlisting and said:

"Don't think of that yet. There's just as important work for you to do right here. The committee is beginning to put on the screws. Your uncle's death has stiffened us up. There'll be a spy-guard posted at the Little Falls. We're to send militia to garrison Stanwix. Our hands will bear down heavily. Catching one skunk like McDonald is of more service to the border than marching against British regulars."

"McDonald won't come here. By this time he's learned the belt was stolen. He's on his way back to Oswego to report to Guy Johnson, while some one unknown to us is making for Johnson Hall to tell Sir John. I want you to look after the farm. Bring the cattle over here. I'll take one of the horses. If Mr. Horace Martin and his daughter should return to the valley, they are to have the use of the place."

We had stayed up long beyond the usual hour, but after Herbert and I had gone to bed he would have talked all night had I permitted.

"You must take me with you," he insisted. "I vum and vow I won't stay up here like a stump any longer. I want to see some fighting."

"You'll see fighting here before it's over. Cruel fighting," I told him.

This was to quiet and soothe him. But if I could have foreseen! Poor lad. Dear lad.

The roofs of house and barn were white with frost when we went down to breakfast. We talked little at the table. Mrs. Vischer looked as if she had been weeping. When I picked up my rifle she threw her arms about my neck and kissed me. They seemed to know I wished only for Herbert's

company when I started for the farm. It seemed unreal to hear him speak of events taking place before I started out to find my uncle and Long Gentry as happening only a short time before. I could not rid myself of the notion I had been away from the valley a very long time.

He had kept the key under the door-stone, so that I might find it should I return direct to the house. I opened the door and stepped in, followed by a path of sunlight. The fat cat stretched on her cushion and gave me no heed. When she rose and deigned to notice us it was to Herbert she went and arched her back against his legs. He was the one who fed her milk. I was startled to behold the Bible just where I had left it after finding my uncle's note. We went up-stairs to my room and from the chest under the bed I pulled out my forest dress and shifted to it.

"Going to take them beads?" asked Herbert.

He referred to the string of white wampum in the bottom of the chest. It seemed right I should carry Miss Nancy's belt with me, and I hung the string around my neck inside my hunting-shirt.

"Wish you was coming right back to run the farm," he sighed.

But I believed I never could come back to run the farm until life had greatly changed.

"We'll all be glad to come home after the war is fought out," I told him.

We went down-stairs and out into the early sunlight. I locked the door and gave him the key, and advised him:

"Until the weather sets in cold you'd better keep the cat here. She'll keep the squirrels out. Your father is to do what-

ever he thinks best about the stock. Keep and use it, or sell it."

"Squirrels are pesky nuisances," he mumbled.

As he pocketed the key he stared at me strangely, his boyish face filled with foreboding; and he gently said—

"Benajah, you're 'lowing you'll git killed and ain't never coming back."

"I haven't any foolish notions on that score," I assured him. "We'll have the redcoats whipped and I'll be back before you know it."

"That's the way to talk and feel. We'll go out hunting and have some mighty good times."

He knew where I would go next and without a word led the way to the sunny slope of our fairest field, where, through the bare branches of the trees one could catch glimpses of the Mohawk. It was where Uncle David would have preferred to rest, for it was there my Aunt Rachel was buried. The grave was marked with a massive slab, neatly carved as only Mr. Vischer could carve it.

We returned to the house and Herbert brought a horse from the barn. We shook hands without a word, and I rode down the road. Not until I reached the turn did I look back. Herbert was making a strong effort to accept the parting as something of no account. And the last I saw of him he was going through the pantomime of aiming and firing a gun, but doing it in a grotesque and absurd manner to make me smile.

Two weeks later I was a member of Daniel Morgan's riflemen and was off to starve and freeze in Benedict Arnold's expedition against Quebec.

TO BE CONTINUED



In Defiance of Euclid

by Dale Collins



Author of "In the Depths," "On Allah's Sea," etc.

THE triangle was familiar enough, but the wife, the husband and the other man were set in a dark and primitive land where life was starkly fierce and death ran swift. Their position was fraught with peril. There was no accommodating judge to break the bonds; there could be no escape from the facts. David Davenport and his wife and Lester Payne had to solve their problem in the fever-ridden atmosphere of New Guinea with the wall of the jungle all about.

The men thought of obvious courses which led to murder and disaster; it remained for flighty little Mrs. Davenport who so recently had been that spoiled child, Annabelle Hilton, to arrive at a solution which owed nothing to wisdom and defied the late Mr. Euclid.

She was fluffy, soft and pink in a harsh land; she spoke in italicized, sighing syllables in a land where talk was rough; she was most feminine in a land where there is one woman to every hundred males—and thus was a jewel lovely as Sheba and as much to be desired. She came nigh achieving that which modern juries recognize as the greatest of compliments—the tribute of a murder done for her sake; and the fact that she was quite unworthy has no bearing on the case.



LESTER PAYNE, the planter, and David Davenport, his overseer, sat upon the roof of the Pacific.

It was wet, dripping wet, up there among the clouds, and the height took them out of the tropics into a queer world of shadows and coldness which was unnatural and dream-like. The jungle flourished,

feeding on the perpetual moisture and the the blazing sun, growing so strongly and so lushly that it acquired the semblance of a living creature which held mountain and valley in a clammy embrace.

Despite all the wood piled upon it by the boys, the fire burned ill, smoking and guttering. Mist-ghosts writhed about it, waving white veils, and immediately beyond the shallow pool of the glare the terrible night shut down like a wall. Through the clouds the stars showed in places, big and bright and hot. Upon the other side of the valley watery patches of light told of the village which was to be their destination upon the morrow. It was so close that a stone could have been flung across into the huts, but between the camp and the village lay fourteen hours of arduous and heart-breaking climbing, bursting through that living jungle, scrambling down bare rock-faces and wading along torrents. They were in a world of deception and fantasy which delighted in its own weirdness. When the gods contrived those ranges they were drunk with nectar and in a mood for awful pranks.

Silence built barriers between the two white men who should have cleaved to each other in that strange environment of the dark island. There was more than silence between them—there were thoughts of murder, for they were men born of women and remaining ever women's toys. The trouble was that young wife, that spoiled child, in the house upon the coast, eighty miles away as the crow flies but five weary days off as the men had traveled. She was Davenport's wife, but Payne desired her and Payne was a big, handsome man and Payne was boss.

In a latitude of 9 South, eight thousand feet up amid the stars, in a barbaric land, it was not good for those two to be alone. Anything might happen—they might arrive at any solution of the triangular problem—and the real world would never know. The ranges would keep a secret. Passion and hate intensified in that solitude.

Payne looked at Davenport, darkly, furtively, by the somber glow, and he saw a small, thin man, sucked empty by the vampire of fever. That such a man should possess the woman he desired and who desired him maddened him more than if he had been a worthy rival. But Davenport had contrived to tie himself to his treasure with the bonds of the law. It would be easy—nobody would be any the wiser—a slip, a spear thrust in the dark—treacherous natives in the Van Roons Ranges—what could be simpler?

Davenport looked at Payne, quickly, fearfully, and he saw a dark, strong, bold-eyed man, the evil in him expressed in the old gash which scarred his jaw and chin. But Davenport saw more than this, for his pale eyes made sharp by fear burrowed into Payne's soul and found therein a thing dreadful to look upon. This thing was the knowledge that Payne had joined the recruiting expedition at the last moment because he wanted to get him alone in the wilderness and put him out of the way. Put him out of the way!

The words cut through Davenport's brain, sawing this way and that. For what other reason had Payne left the comfort of the plantation when there was no need? Both of them out recruiting at the same time? Folly! Unless—unless Payne wanted to put him away. He'd watch Payne, and he'd get out when this trip was over, before it was too late. Payne wouldn't get the chance to murder him and plunder him of Nan. He'd have to find another job, and that wouldn't be easy with no market for rubber, and plantations idle all through the islands. And him not so long married! What a shame, what a crime!

Thus mused the two white men alone amid the brown barbarians on the roof of the Pacific, and each read the other's thoughts.

The carriers passed about like shadows, or crouched shivering about a smaller blaze. The mist weaved and dripped; the jungle dripped. Tobacco would not burn, and malaria was in their bones.

"Get a start at daylight; turn in now!" said Payne mechanically, and only his tongue spoke, for the rest of his being was intent upon his thoughts.

"Yes," Davenport agreed, though he only knew that he'd have to look out Payne didn't do away with him while he slept—if not that night, then the next, or the next and so on in a seemingly endless vista of dread.



THE snake which poised in the tangle of jungle was a tropic death more swift, more sure than any investigated by the Rockefeller Institute. The natives of the high ranges called it the Aki-awa, which means "the death that bursts," because its venom puffs up a man like a balloon, colors him ghastly hues of green and black, and slays him as the name implies. There is no antidote. Between the striking of the fangs and the mercy of death is a hell without doors.

The party trod the stony, weary path of a mountain torrent's bed, the two white men, slipping and cursing and aching, leading the way in a mist of physical weariness. Behind them the boys trailed with their burdens. On either hand the jungle poured down, cascading turbulently to meet above their heads in a smother of green, like conflicting waves, so that the light was dim. The water, up to their knees, rushed by as if it felt some horror and would not stay its panic career until it reached the soothing oblivion of the sea.

Down in that ravine where the light was weird, where the green tide shut out heaven, where all nature was mad and strange, David Davenport saw the Aki-awa poised, with Payne—the big man arrogant and unyielding in the leader's place—as its target.

The prim human method of measuring the unknown quantity called time is false and meaningless. Eternity may be in the fraction of what is dubbed a second. It was for David Davenport. In a space too minute to be registered upon a watch, he saw freedom from the threat of death, a torturing end for his enemy, the wrongdoer punished, the sinned against required; he saw himself stepping into Payne's place as manager, free to hold his wife's love. And simultaneously there was room for the throb of impulse and instinct: the human fear of death, horror of the snake, nausea at its filthy form, the insistent demand to the spark within him to snatch back that other

spark from the untellable void of space. Unanalysable currents flooded through him, mastering his muscles more completely than the pictures in that little part of him, his brain.

This while the yellow snake with the red stripe flashed out, aiming for the brown skin behind Payne's ear.

Davenport acted with speed and sureness derived from everything beyond flesh in man. He was not a foot behind his master. His arm flung out like a flail, rigid and without feeling; the clenched fist struck down upon the snake's flat head. Through another eternity he felt the scaly skin against his, and then his hand rose again, seemingly slowly and with burdened difficulty. The cinematograph can reproduce that effect when it casts off the bondage of the clock. So moved Davenport's arm, and he waited—patiently and coldly—to learn if the death he had averted from his enemy would strike upon him. It did not. The snake swung sharply in a crescent, and the jungle took it as if lightning had flashed.

Time reverted to the scale of human measurement.

The cries of the boys burst out, Payne spat a clipped oath and reeled aside, and Davenport fainted, falling face downward in the panic-stricken water, the back of his shirt bulging above the surface like a bag in which kittens have been drowned.



THE village upon the heights yielded ten boys prepared to go down to the coast and earn tobacco and calico that there might be rubber for the wheels of automobiles, for shoe-heels, for bath-mats. The harvest could be reckoned reasonably satisfactory.

As men who have beheld a shameful thing together and are abashed, Davenport and Payne had avoided each other's eyes after the first moments of recovery which followed upon the void in the torrent's shadowy bed. Payne had thanked his rescuer, jerkily and clumsily; Davenport had muttered that it was all right; they had gone on again. But they were bewildered and shaken men who saw the scheme of their thoughts riddled by forces outside their knowledge. There was anger in them, and fear, and bitterness; there was joy, relief and gratitude. But all these things were so muddled and so crowded that the colors ran together and the pattern was

unintelligible. Therefore, they dared not look into each other's eyes.

They sat upon either side of the smoky fire, and the night was less cloud-haunted. But their tobacco burned no better, nor was there less malaria in their bones. Close at hand the squalid village slept in silence broken only by the grunt of a pig or the whine of a cur haunted in dreams by some old terror. The stars were brave. Outside the circle of the firelight New Guinea breathed.

Since Davenport's remark after supper that the wood-pigeons had been tough no words had passed between them. That was an hour ago. But the pause had passed unnoticed, for their minds carried on a strange discussion through the veil of smoke and flame.

Payne, looking out into the dark, abruptly returned to vocal speech.

"Why did you do it, then?" he asked.

Davenport shook his head, slowly and meditatively.

"I don't know!" he answered, as if he said the most natural thing in the world in confessing that he did not understand what had prompted him to save the life of the man opposite him. "I don't know!" he repeated blankly, in his voice a hint of repentance for a foolish act.

Shadows of thoughts passed across Payne's roughly handsome face, and a trembling pulse was busy at the top of his scar. He sat strained and glum for a time, and then started to his feet, towering out of the light so that when he spoke the words seemed to tumble down from space.

"I say," the voice was riled, petulant, "I wish it hadn't happened—it shouldn't have happened! Oh, I admit it right enough: you saved my life—you had guts, I give you all that in! You got the better of me that far, because I'm grateful and all that, but——"

The words broke off, and Davenport sat dumb, staring at the two legs which rose before him like the ruins of a statue. He wanted to stand up, also, but he did not. He sat by the fire and the light flickered on him, toying with the silver wisp in his hair.

A hand descended from the Olympian regions above. It broke into his line of vision, the index finger aimed at him like a gun. The voice resumed:

"I say, what you did any one'd have done that had the guts. I've thanked you, and

I'd say that. But don't you try trading on it—don't you try to get on my soft side. It won't go. And here's why: You know what's been in my mind on this trip—I've read that clear enough in your eyes—you've got on to that right enough! It could have been done, too—easy! You know that! So don't you try coming on that sympathy touch. You saved my life today, didn't you?"

Davenport stirred wearily, and passed his hand across his brow.

"I don't know why," he said listlessly. "But anyway who's doing all the talk about it? Have I asked for anything for doing it? Have I even said I did it?" His voice rose high, complaining.

"Never mind all that, just you listen to what I'm saying. Here's the point, then: You saved my life today—all right, you've saved your own, too. I go on living because of what you did; you go on living because of what I'm not going to do—not now! If that doesn't satisfy you, you should have thought things out better, and let the Aki-awa do its job. I'm not saying I'm sorry you didn't. I'm grateful, but we're quits! This doesn't change other things. A life for a life, that's fair enough."

"Well, what are you getting at?" Davenport put the question stupidly, knowing it to be superfluous.

"You know what I'm getting at. You know what I'm saying is that your wife loves me and I love her, and that I'm going to take her. She's too good for you. And now don't you start whining that you saved my life, because that account's all square as I've told you. Think yourself lucky to be dealing with me, for many a man with the power wouldn't be so fair!"

The claim came down out of the dark so calmly and in such a reasonable tone that it justified itself and sounded logical.

Davenport did not question it. The day's experiences and the world in which they sojourned were in league against his reason. Fear was in him, also, and regret.

"I'll take her if she'll come to me, and she will!"

"No, no, she won't. You can't take her. She's mine, Payne, and be — to you. I tell you she's my wife!"

"It's no use arguing. What I say's easily proved. When we get back to Elundra, you'll see. But I just wanted you to understand that I was grateful. You can sleep

easy now. Better turn in—long day to-morrow!"

He towered majestically into space, arrogant and confident, as if there could be no possibility of little David Davenport turning on him, as if he were a god giving gracious judgment. It was finished. He passed into the darkness, leaving Dorothy's husband sitting by the fire that had no heat.

For a long time Davenport sat there, and being in a nightmare world he admitted to himself that there was something in what Payne said, and though aware of the haunting doubts that occur in dreams he was tied by the bonds that, also, are in dreams.



AS THE sun precipitately plunged down behind the tallest of the succession of ranges they came to the end of the day's march. For ten hours their path had lain along razor-back ridges, bare and mad and sun-baked, where lizards drowsed and scorpions and centipedes scrambled. Beneath them the clouds had made a woolen sea, marooning them from the world of men in a universe of aching blue.

Above the clouds in those latitudes they had marched through hours of scorching torment. The sun had flogged them, the rocks had been as the shelves of an oven. After the humid depths of the jungle-choked valleys the exposure was cruel, killing.

When they entered the stunted village greeted by staring, watchful eyes and the barking of dogs, Payne the strong man, was still striding in the van, grim and unbroken. But Davenport had fallen behind. His feet were failing him; he swayed and staggered as a man drunk. His veins were blazing; drums beat in his head, and cold and heat swept through him in alternate waves, freezing and parching him by turns. The spindle-shanked natives sprouted up to an amazing height, and grew misty and twisty, like *djinn*s rising from bottles in the engravings of the Arabian Nights at home.

For hours he had been conscious of the mad world's inclination to grow more mad, but he had fought against this. With the day's march done his powers suddenly ebbed, leaving him too feeble to fight any more. The world leaped mad as he had known it would. There were drums in his head—

Payne, advancing toward the village headman, heard the boys cry out, and turning saw the overseer lying upon the rocks

with a cur sniffing at him. He swore angrily as he swung back. Illness was a luxury in the Van Roon Ranges.

The little man lay flat upon his face.

"Sunstroke and fever!" was Payne's diagnosis, on turning him over.

Davenport's features were flushed, the veins in his brow standing up like cords of blue silk, and he breathed stertorously. He looked weak and helpless and pitiful, sprawled in the violent glory of the sunset hour.

"Poor swine!" said Payne, and although in his voice there was contempt for the man who was weak there was something of sympathy, too. The broken man at his feet increased his own strength and mastery, and flattered his sense of superiority, making pity a noble sentiment natural to him. He felt the spiritual intoxication which is the reward of the charitable.

"Poor swine," said he, "poor little —!"

With the setting of the sun great banks of cloud surged out of space, flooding the empty world with threats. Lightning flickered in the windows of these dark castles, and thunder rumbled and crashed. A wretched night was presaged. Confronted by this warning Payne signed to the boys to carry Davenport into the village head-house, for it would be dry in there if vermin-infested and noisome.

The village headman—an ancient falling in upon himself so that it seemed the bones must pierce his parchment skin—raised no demur, but his eyes were greedy for the gifts of tobacco which would be his payment. As they entered the house the rain swept down in a solid sheet, and hammered on the peaked roof of thatch with heavy, throbbing blows.

Payne lighted a match, and the glimmer grudgingly showed him glimpses of the interior, concealing much, hinting at dark places beyond its ken, lighting the mother-of-pearl eyes of the skulls which stood in a row upon a rough shelf, and touching the pomp of the paradise bird head-dresses ranged beneath. Totem poles ten feet high—pillars of grinning faces, blending bird, beast, devil and human—stood beside the door; there were spears and shields piled in corners; a stale, musky smell hung heavy.

"Cheerful!" commented Payne as the match went out.

They set Davenport down upon a raised bamboo platform, and Payne lighted a

lantern. The light served to make the shadows more solid than the complete darkness, turning them into grotesque shapes hewn from ebony. The rain thudded and splashed, and the thunder sprang from peak to peak, echoing and roaring. At intervals lightning stabbed into the place, revealing its details with a fierce clarity which printed every object upon the brain in fire, but when the shadows swept in again they erased these impressions.

Swearing and complaining, Payne busied himself, kicking the boys to make them hasten and as an outlet for his feelings. He made the sufferer as comfortable as might be with blankets and canvas; unlaced his boots, tucked him in as a mother does her babe; forced aspirin and whisky between his lips. He might have been tending his dearest friend. Payne did not understand the incongruity of his behavior. The night and the place banished thought; it was as if the torment of the heavens and the fiends of the long-house were too disturbing, too terrific, to allow the mind to find its balance.

His ministrations proceeded mechanically, his patient being no more than a human symbol of weakness and suffering.

The cook-boy prepared a meal of tinned foods, and Payne ate without leaving the sick man. The thunder was less frequent now, but the rain still hammered. Quiet descended upon the people of the village, and it seemed to Payne that he was alone with the demons of the night and the fevered man. Even as his thoughts began to live again, a queer mutter broke from Davenport's wan lips. The big man soothed him, hand upon hot brow.

At this Davenport's eyes opened wide upon his enemy that was his nurse, but his eyes were blind and had no comprehension.

"He's not here?" he demanded anxiously. "Tell me—he's not here?" The voice was that of a man hounded through hell by fear.

"No," said Payne, soothingly, "he's gone!"

"That's good—very good!" jibbered Davenport, staring at the man he did not wish to see, and this fixed regard which signaled no meaning to the fevered brain made Payne feel as if, indeed, he had gone, as if he were no more than a shadow sitting among shadows. "He'd get me for sure—he'd get me right enough. I never said I'd saved his life, but any other man'd been decent

enough not to say what he said. Nan—he's gone to take Nan! I tell you he's gone to get Nan while you keep me tied up here!"

"No, he's out recruiting—he's up in the ranges!"

"That's good!" panted Davenport, and then thrusting hot fingers over the other's hand: "But you ought to warn whoever he's with that he'll get him. He'll be sitting there planning to murder him all the time. You ought to warn that chap not to save his life. That won't do him any good."

He sat up, ghastly, the sweat flooding from him.

"Tell that chap if he saves Payne's life, Payne'll steal his wife. Tell him Payne's a big ——! Tell him I could have let the Aki-awa kill Payne, and like a fool I didn't! Tell him not to be a fool. He——"

"All right," said Payne, patting the hot hand, "as soon as you lie down I'll send a boy to warn that chap who's out with Payne. Lie down and I'll go!"

The swollen eyes stared at him, and gradually his meaning filtered through the dancing fiends of the fever. Davenport fell back and hunched the blankets about him, his teeth a-chatter.

Payne rose and moved out of the light. Halting he stared back at the sick man, but he did not see him for he was looking into the uncharted sea of his own soul.

"Why shouldn't I kill him?" he asked. "It wouldn't be murder just to let him die. If he can't stick the life what's he here for—the useless weakling? Just let him die, and serve him right! He can't expect me to be fooling about after him all the time, nursing him, worrying over him. After all, I was going to do him in—he's all that stands between me and Nan—why shouldn't I let him die?"

He found no answer to the question. The more often he asked it the less reasonable it seemed and the more remarkable the fact that it should have arisen at all. The obvious thing to do was to let him die. After all Nan might stick to her husband. He had little enough on which to build his confident assumption of victory—a word, a sigh, a glance, a passing caress. Little enough to take a risk. There would be no risk if he let Davenport die.

A movement from the bed drew him out of his meditations. As if the fiends from the totem-poles and the fiends from the night had taken possession of their lives,

Davenport had responded to the thought in Payne's mind. He sat up, he staggered down from the couch, he took swaying steps through the lantern-light.

The watcher was conscious of tricklings of excitement. He only had to relax his vigilance for a breath, to doze where he stood—and who could be a watchful nurse after such a day and such a night? And the gods would decide. The solution of the triangle's problem was simple. He had merely to stand aside, and Davenport would go out into the storm of his own volition. Out there death waited. Davenport would be washed into eternity, leaving only two sides of the triangle.

But, unconsciously, Payne's eyes focussed upon that small figure staggering toward the door—weak, feeble, racked. Marvelous that such a frail creature should have had the courage to strike at the Aki-awa with his bare hand and that to save an enemy's life! This flash of thought absorbed him, and the figure of the sick man was magnified in the moment so that its tragic hopelessness was the only real thing in the world.

With four quick strides Payne reached him, and snatched him back from death. There was a brief, fierce struggle, and then Payne had mastered him and had him between the blankets again and was forcing whisky between his trembling lips. The strength passed out of the twitching limbs, but beneath the orchestration of the heavens, the mutterings continued.

"—but that's not so," Davenport was saying. "We were more than square. He'd have given me nothing in return for his life. You see, I've got the right to get him now. I gave him his life and he didn't appreciate it—all right I'll take it away again. Take it again—yes, thanks, I'll have the same, but not so much bitters this time, bad for a man. Well, as I was saying there we were—sorry, take a light from mine, will you? And I held four kings pat—pat, mind you."

"No cards," I said, "but I'll get him right enough now. I wasn't game before, but now right's on my side and all. All aboard there, please; come along there will you! Curse that boy; he always puts curry powder on the salad! I'll——"

On and on rambled David Davenport, cursing boys, cursing Payne; blending stories of this and that with the bitterest judgments upon the man who planned to

steal his love; now raving, now talking in tones of sweetest reason. And Payne sat listening and smoking and thinking, considering the fact that he was saving the life of a man who planned to kill him, even as that man had saved him when such thoughts had been in his mind. Rain hammered on the thatch. The thunder retreated, roaring and grunting into its cave.

"Blarst the little snake!" said Payne, and then—"Funny how different things look to different people." And again—"He's set on murdering me right enough!"

But he did not cease his vigil, and he plied Davenport with aspirin and spirits and chafed his hands and feet and kept him well-covered from the night.

Ere dawn the patient sat up and cursed him for a filthy parrot that had been taught to swear by a drunken sailor; shrieked that he wouldn't have his eyes picked out; and then burst into a torrential sweating which washed the lines from his face and drowned the fever so that he slipped quietly down among his blankets and lay like a man who has been drowned and whose body is sodden with the sea.

Only then did Payne sleep. When he awoke the sunlight was striking with broad swords through chinks and crannies, and had set a great golden seal upon the floor of the long-house just within the low door.

Three hours later Davenport returned to consciousness. He looked wan and emptied, but the fiends had gone, their exorcism leaving him weak. In him, however, was the sense of cleanliness and escape, which comes when the fever has been conquered and the mind is well again. The air was fresh and sweet after the storm. As he sat up, leaning heavily upon his hands, Payne approached.

"Fever?" asked Davenport.

"Yes, and a touch of the sun!"

"Delirious?"

"Pretty bad!"

Davenport's pale-blue eyes were as the eyes of a child, for convalescence brings a sense of youth. He looked wonderingly at Payne, and from him to the chair formed by the baggage, and from that to the open medicine-chest. He knew that fever does not pass swiftly without treatment, and understood something of what had passed

in the wild darkness. He opened his mouth to speak and then closed it again, and still his blue eyes considered Payne, and Payne returned his glance in a fashion not unkindly since he had a proprietorial interest in the man whose life he had saved. In that pause the events of the night were eloquently discussed.

"Thanks," said Davenport at last, scraping all the superfluous things he had thought of saying, "you saved my life. You could have left me—Any boys joined up?"

"That's all right," Payne answered briefly. "Yes, ten! We're complete now; we can get back!"

"Good," said Davenport, and added awkwardly after a pause: "—shame you loved my wife, because—"

The remark was foolish, the result of his weakness. He deplored it. No harm was done, however, for Payne, busy about the gear, made it quite clear that he wasn't listening.

In the days that followed they talked a lot about home and "going South" and the lack of wisdom in Government circles. But of personal affairs they spoke not at all. For their lives they could not see the solution of the triangle's problem, since the one had his rights and his love and the other was a stubborn strong-willed man. And yet, living in the wilderness, they esteemed each other, and regretted their unfortunate position with a naive intensity.



THEY came out of the jungle, crossed the narrow stream on the familiar bridge of a fallen tree, and so to the plantation where the rubber grew that there might be automobiles, tires and rubber-heels and bath-mats.

"That's odd!" said Davenport, pointing.

The two houses standing side by side were branded with that intangible lack of soul which is written on a dwelling unoccupied. The brand was expressed in a thousand ways too tiny to be noted consciously.

But it wasn't odd. Annabelle Davenport, that spoiled child, had performed a geometrical miracle in defiance of the late Mr. Euclid, having squared the triangle by a single bold stroke. She had run away with Patsie Reardon, skipper of the trading-schooner *Wraith*.

SHOOTING AN OIL WELL

by W. J. S.

PROBABLY the biggest thrill oil men get outside of seeing a real gusher "come in" is when a "shot" is put in. A shot or the exploding of a charge of nitroglycerin in a well is what makes large wells out of small ones and large wells larger.

When a well which is to be shot is drilled in or completed the shooter is sent for. The size of the shot or quantity of "soup" to be used is decided by the diameter of the hole, the depth of the sand and how heavily the producer wants his well shot. Ordinarily shots average from sixty to eighty quarts. Some wells, though, are shot with as little as five quarts and others go well over the thousand-quart mark.

The shooter brings the shot to the well in a motor-car with an especially constructed body for carrying the nitro and his equipment. Water is put in the hole to be used as tamping to hold the force of the explosion down as much as possible. Care must be used to keep the water below the pipe which is used as casing or the pipe will either split or collapse at the top of the water when the shot is exploded.

A measuring-line is then run down the hole to see if any cavings have fallen in it. If so and it comes above the spot designated as the bottom of the shot, this must be cleaned out. Next the stem or bailer is lowered to the floor next to and on the opposite side of the hole from the engine and the shooter is ready to work.

The shells which are used to lower the glycerin are round tin buckets any diameter desired and of a length to hold twenty or thirty quarts each. The line used to lower them is a small but very strong manila line commonly called shooting-cord. The hook on which the shells are hung by bails are made with a big bow over a very short jaw which makes the shells easily unhooked and practically eliminates the chances of rehooking. The reel which holds the line has a

brake attached and is clamped to the fly-wheel of the engine. This is the method used on standard rigs and a good many drilling-machines.

The line is run through a pulley tied to the stem or bailer so that the hook hangs directly over the hole. If the bottom of the shot is to be above the bottom of the hole, an anchor—a tin tube one inch in diameter—is fastened on a tip on the bottom of the first shell and the shell hung in the hole and the glycerin poured. Nitroglycerin is very harmless-looking, something like a thin white sirup. The shell is then lowered to the bottom of the hole by hand, unhooked and the line brought out by an engine. The glycerin being heavier than water, there is no difficulty under ordinary conditions. This is repeated until the entire shot is lowered; the measuring-line being run on top of the first and last shells to check the position of the shot.

The shot is now ready to be exploded which is done by means of a squib. Varying conditions in the hole cause different kinds of squibs and different methods to be used. The jack squib which is most commonly used is a tin cylinder four to seven feet long, two inches in diameter, pointed and weighted at the bottom. A stick of dynamite, with caps and fuses attached, two being used for more assurance, is put in the bottom of the squib, the ends of the fuses extending a few inches above the top.

The squib is then filled with sand and the top crudely sealed with waste or mud and the sides bent over. The fuses are then lighted and the squib dropped; the fuses being long enough to permit the squib to rest on top of the shot before exploding.

The force of this explosion sets off the nitroglycerin and the effect is generally about the same as a gusher except that rocks, sometimes almost as large as the hole, are thrown out with the fluid.

The War of the Californias



by
H.C.Wire

Author of "Robin Hood from Texas."

IT IS not written down in history, this war between Alta and Baja California; nor has the name of the man who fought it, Michael Foster, been heralded down through the years. But it happened for all that and makes a story often told in the country around the Mission San Juan Capistrano, near which the old Foster ranch-house still stands.

Michael Foster was a fighting man, which is saying considerable of one who lived in those days when every shop-clerk packed a gun and found mere living a fighting job in itself.

Foster had come to California in the van of the forty-niners and had made quite a stake in placer gold before the full tide of the rush filled the cañons with greenhorns and made gold-washing a crowded profession. But Foster was through with it, and now had other plans.

Instead of throwing his fortune into the wildcat schemes that had sprung up by the hundreds, he wisely packed it in three leather pokes, hitched his team of mules to the old spring wagon and headed for newer country toward the south.

Some months later found him driving from the plaza of the adobe village, Los Angeles, still seeking that upon which he had set his mind.

Ninety miles farther south he found it; a broad fertile valley, with rich black soil in the bottom for farming, grass on the hills

for cattle and a winding stream with plenty of water for all his needs. At the valley's mouth were the gray walls of the Mission San Juan Capistrano, and beyond that the blue Pacific.

It was a beautiful spot; quiet, peaceful, it seemed; and Michael Foster sought peace. So he traded a poke of dust to the Spaniard who owned the land; he staked out his mules; he set up a camp and built himself a home from the clay under foot.

The cattle Foster started quickly multiplied. His troubles did likewise; for the Spaniards in the country helped themselves to the growing herd. Even the Indians, pious souls when under the eyes of the mission fathers, stole the white man's cattle, his horses and even the furnishings of his house.

Foster was quick to retaliate. He had himself appointed a deputy United States marshal, the first in that part of the country, and thus under sanction of the law he proceeded to shoot fear into his valley of San Juan Capistrano.

The years passed. Foster's ranch prospered. He married, raised a comfortable family and so settled down to enjoy a peaceful old age. But his was fighting blood that could never cool.

It was a soft Spring evening late in the sixties that Foster, now gray-haired and a little stooped, was sitting on the veranda of his ranch-house, barefooted as was his custom, when a horseman came slowly out

of the willows along the creek-bed and approached the building.

Even through the dusk, Foster could see the reason for the slow pace—the limp body of a man tied to the saddle behind the rider, legs dangling on one side, head and arms on the other.

Deliberately the old ranchman drew on his boots, stood up, then began filling the bowl of his pipe.

The rider drew rein near the veranda steps. Foster went to meet him, glancing at the dead man.

"Who did it, Joe?" he asked.

He spoke casually, as if merely asking the time of day, but his face had hardened. The dead man was his range boss.

"Them two Mexicans Pete here fired off the place yesterday," the rider answered. "Just revenge, I reckon. I seen 'em from across the cañon, but couldn't warn him in time."

"Which way'd they go?"

"South."

"Makin' for the border, I suppose."

For a moment Foster stood looking in the direction the murderers had gone, as if following them with his eyes. Then he turned to his rider.

"Joe! Go get Davie; he's in the bunk-house. You two follow those —s and bring 'em back if you have to go clean through — to do it! You'd better hurry."

In five minutes two horsemen, Joe Hammond and Davie Gray, had loped away from the ranch-house, heading south, and Michael Foster was sitting again, barefooted, enjoying the peace of an early Spring.

For five days he waited. Then out of the hills came Joe Hammond alone, looking as if he had obeyed orders to the letter and had gone through — for certain. Both horse and rider were half-famished and gaunt from five days' ceaseless travel. The man was hatless; his clothes were torn; a red streak showed beneath his shirt where a bullet had creased his left side.

He slid to the ground as Foster ran to meet him.

"They've got Dave!" he said, then was speechless.

Foster revived him with a shot of brandy.

"Where'd you go?" he asked.

"Across the line. Started to bring back them murderers, but got took in by Mexican soldiers. Here."

Joe held out a sheet of paper.

Foster studied it for some time. Its meaning was something like this:

The Americans would follow Mexican citizens across the line, would they? Then the Governor of Baja California would teach them a lesson. One of those Americans shall be shot at moonrise of the 10th inst. The other will be returned with this warning: Americans are not welcome below the border.

It was signed by the Governor of Baja California.

"They've got Davie at Cozarro," said Joe, "and I reckon they'll do what that letter says."

Foster tossed the paper to the ground and started toward his corrals.

"Better get some rest," he said to Joe. "I'll want you to show me the way to Cozarro directly."

He saddled a horse and rode up the valley to the home of Jeff Dobbert, his nearest neighbor, a rancher who had come in from Texas a few years before.

"Jeff," he said to the lank, middle-aged man who met him at the door, "I aim to take a trip down south. Want to go along? Some danged Mexicans killed Pete the other day; now they promise to do some shootin' on Davie about tomorrow night. We'll have to hurry."

Jeff turned back into the room.

"Oh, Martha," he called to the plump woman working over a kitchen range. "Put that dinner in a bucket, will you? I'll take it with me."

When he came from the house his gun was already strapped at his hip.

"Need any of my boys?" he asked.

"Yes, if you can spare 'em. I'll take all hands from my place."

Foster returned to his ranch-house and for half an hour, while he waited for Jeff Dobbert, he labored with a pen and a sheet of paper.

When at last he had finished, a document with these printed words lay before him:

If the American prisoner held in Cozarro is not released within two hours before moonrise of the 10th inst., war is hereby declared on the Governor of Baja California.

(Signed) MICHAEL FOSTER,
Deputy Marshal of the United States.

It bore the official seal of Foster's position and whatever more warlike stamps he could find.

Then he garbed himself in an old Army

uniform that was a relic of his Indian-fighting days and left the house.

The men outside stared at him. But he only grinned, climbed into the saddle, and, armed with his declaration of war, he headed his company of "soldiers," now ten in all, on to Mexico.



IT WAS a two days' ordinary ride to Cozarro, but Foster pushed his army through in thirty hours. From the border southward he kept away from the one road, leading his men through a stretch of desert toward the range of hills that surrounded the town.

Just before sunset they had mounted the ridge and could look down upon the adobe village with the white mansion of the governor situated at one side. There Foster explained his plan of attack, compared watches with Jeff, that their time would be exact to the minute, then proceeded down toward the town alone.

He passed untroubled through the darkened streets of mud walls and arrived before the gates of the governor's mansion. Here came the first test of the ranchman's bluff. But Foster, now borrowing the title, "General Frémont, U. S. Army," gained admittance and was presented before the governor.

The Mexican was a short man of apparently weak personality; one of the ever changing line of officials who, in those uncertain times, held their donated jobs for a month perhaps if they were lucky, then were either killed off or were forced to flee into hiding.

Foster's interview was brief. He served the declaration of war. The governor read it. Those were tense moments for the ranchman.

While he waited upon the governor's next move he studied the location of the room and found that fortune was with him. Drawing out his watch, he noted the time, then crossed to a curtained window. There he stopped and faced the Mexican.

"I'll give you just one minute," he said, "to order the American released and brought to me. If you don't—"

Foster flung back the window curtain. Out of the darkness from the hillcrests beyond the town glowed the camp-fires of an army—hundreds of them.

"My men are breaking camp," Foster continued. "At a signal from me to a man below, the word will be given for the town

to be taken. Remember, sir, it is the United States you are fighting!"

For only a moment did the governor hesitate. —, what could be done? Release the *Americanos!*

"You'd better hurry," said Foster. "I shall not leave this window until the man is brought to me."

To the credit of Davie Gray he had the presence of mind not to show surprise at seeing his boss there before the governor in an old Army uniform. Together they left the mansion and made a quick retreat into the hills.

Foster's army of ten was ready, so it was with all possible haste that they started back toward the border.

But meanwhile the garrison *comandante* had not been asleep; nor was he the easily bluffed weakling that his governor had proven to be.

No sooner had the Americans left the mansion than a soldier who had been sent by the *comandante* to find the reason of the fires had returned with the truth. A mere handful of *Americanos!* And Foster's army had not yet passed through the hills when by the light of approaching dawn they saw a troop of Mexican cavalry come sweeping up their back trail.

The horses of the Americans were already overriden; the Mexicans' mounts were fresh, and Foster soon realized that only minutes separated his band from the cavalry.

Toward the source of a steep, brush-filled cañon up which they rode he called a halt. A wind had sprung up from the north that sent the old man's white hair down around his face as he turned to count the Mexicans.

"Boys," he said, "there are too many against us. But no use all of us bein' meat for those —s, so you all get the — out of here. I can stand 'em off long enough to give you runnin'-room."

The men wouldn't hear of it. Old Foster raged. Then Davie Gray spoke up. He seemed to know the stubborn will of his boss better than the others.

"Sure we'll go," he agreed.

Most of the men caught the wink he meant for them.

"You ain't nothin' but a worthless old cuss anyhow," he went on. "Nobody'll miss you."

"You, Davie, mind your manners!"

Foster retorted. "Now get out of here!"

They got; but only as far as the first bend a few yards up the cañon. There they stopped and turned back with rifles ready, expecting to meet the Mexicans with Foster.

For a short time the old ranchman sat motionless. Then a new plan seemed suddenly to enter his mind, for even as the first bullets of the approaching cavalry began kicking the dirt around him he leaped from his horse, grabbed a handful of dry grass and struck a match to it.

Caught by the wind, the flames spread into the brush as through tinder. Foster clutched a torch and scrambled up the cañon wall, leaving a trail of fire behind.

Seeing his idea, the other men ran back to the first fire, drew out burning sticks and spread the flames. A hail of lead was poured into them, but they kept on, and within the moment the narrow cañon was filled with a wall of fire driven before the wind upon the cavalry below.

For them there was no way out but back; and they took it, urging their horses in full rout with an inferno licking at their heels.

So ended the war of the Californias, and Michael Foster, once more on the veranda of his ranch-house in the valley of San Juan Capistrano, sat barefooted as was his custom, enjoying the comforts of a peaceful old age.



Author of "Driftwood Fire," "As Gentlemen Should," etc.

GAVRILO PRIBYLOF looked up to see the old Aleut, Matzah, standing in the companion-way door.

"Wherefore come, Fish Eagle?" the commander asked kindly, though with a slight frown of annoyance. "If to prate again of your Dream Islands wreathed in fog, I am too busy with figures to listen. In a short half-hour we shall be in the inner cove of Illiuliuk, and I have book-work to do before then."

Matzah moistened his lips. He was an Islander of fifty Summers; barefooted; his yellow dank hair escaping from a sea-cap and falling over his shoulders.

"Not of the Fog Islands this time," he answered in the dialect, "though even if I wanted to speak of them again, young sir,

you would do well to stop making bug tracks on paper and hear my words. But I come of a different matter."

"Well, what?" asked Pribylof.

"The *bidarka** which brought the pilot brought also two letters for you."

The commander put down his quill and took the letters which Matzah held out. With a nod of thanks to the Aleut, he turned again to his tiny desk, broke the seals, cut the strings with his belt knife, and opened the thicker of the notes.

The cabin was only a step across and two paces long, but within it Pribylof had contrived to stow things not only of necessity and of comfort but even of refinement.

**Bidarka* is the Russian name for any one- or two-man skin canoe; in other words, a *kayak*. A *bidarra* is a larger *oomiak*, frequently used as a deck boat by the early Russians.

Shoulder-high above the desk was a built-in berth with mattress of furs and covering of sea-otter skins. A jewel-hilted rapier, of Milanese make and two centuries old, formed the center piece of a rack of blades ranging from plum-blue Toledo steel to the copper skinning-knives of the Mainlanders. A small silver samovar, carved chastely with designs of sable hunting, sat on the desk amid a careless clutter of papers and ivory weights of Aleut handiwork. A pair of flint-lock, long-barreled pistols in leather holsters; a musketoon pegged beside the bunk; an ikon in a niche illumined by the same red candle which lighted the desk, some nautical instruments, quadrants, chronometers, and compasses, in solid brass cases—these were but the things which took the eye immediately.

G. Gavriilo Pribylof was like the cabin of the *Sv. Georgiy*—a strange mixture of seawanderer, courtier, and *promyshlenik*.^{*} He was of little more than medium height and slender, yet the swing of his shoulders and toss of his head made him seem tall and even sturdy. His pantaloons and nether vest were of velvet; his coat was of close-cropped sealskin. His hair, soft brown and curly, glowed in the candle-light. His eyes were the deep blue of Kirghiz skies, at times with a quick, stabbing fire leaping from them, at times with the far-off reverie look of one used to searching far horizons.

The first of the notes which Matzah had brought was printed by a masculine hand in bold Russian character. It bore the legend of Siberian Okhotsk and date of June, 1785. Its message, in language courteous enough and veiled, brought a frown to Pribylof's face.

The note ran:

Doubtless, your ill luck of the past three years is attributable to factors beyond your control. The growing dearth of sea-otters among the Kamchatka Islands,[†] not to mention the almost total absence of the more precious foxes, will perhaps explain partially why the *Sv. Georgiy* for these three years has been a money loss to myself and to my associates. However, the ships of Shelikof return season after season with cargoes of a hundred thousand rubles each. Whether this comes from bolder adventuring in searching out new and more distant hunting-grounds, or whether from other reasons, I am not opinionated at this present writing. There is no fault to be found, I believe, either with the *Sv. Georgiy* or its outfitting in men and equipment. With a smaller crew and a ship of but seventy tons, our captain Kiril Kusain brought to Bolsheretsk a

capture of ninety thousand rubles for one Winter's work. With a vessel as admirable as the *Sv. Georgiy* he would doubtless double this amount.

I therefore request that you make immediate effort to find a hunting-ground and let nothing stay you from getting a quick cargo; and further that if you discover islands not yet known to the *promyshleniki*, you must report secretly to me at the earliest moment. Word comes to me that Boston ships, from the newly liberated English colonies, are pushing into our waters. They are an adventurous lot and must in no way be given information of our trade or island possessions. Touching the war rumors between ourselves and the Swedes, I enclose a copy of the *ukase* which her Czarish Majesty has commanded to be sent to all vessels in American waters.

LEBEDEF-LASTOCHKIN.

Pribylof read the *ukase* with a smile of slight contempt. Parts of it were underscored by the red ink with which Lebedef had written. It ordered strict avoidance of strange canvas wherever glimpsed. It prescribed, in great detail, a series of signals and counter-signals with sails and flags; and lengthy harangues of gibberish if a strange vessel should by chance get within earshot.

"It were a wonder," said Pribylof to himself, "if, with all these *ukases* scattered abroad, a single Swedish privateer should fail to be provided with one."

The Imperial order went on to command that in event a hostile ship should overtake a Russian vessel, the commander of the latter must destroy all papers, charts, and reports; must scuttle his vessel, and must embark his crew in *bidarras* without regard for his position from land. The *ukase* added a warning that Englishmen captained most of the Swedish privateers; and concluded with a threat of stern punishment to the commander who disobeyed a single word of the Imperial decree.

The second letter, which Pribylof had saved after the manner of pleasure after duty, was in feminine, French handwriting. It also bore the legend of Okhotsk and date of July, and was written in a harmless appearing code which he read easily:

You can not know, dear Gavriilo, of an intrigue among the officers of the Lebedef-Lastochkin Company to give command of the *Sv. Georgiy* to Kiril Kusain. They suspect you of too great friendship with my uncle, Shelikof. Were he here now, he would doubtlessly intercede for you, since his few shares in the Lebedef-Lastochkin Company give him some voice in its management. But he is colonizing on Kadiak, and trying to amend outrages of the earlier *promyshleniki* there; and will not return until July of next year.

Lebedef-Lastochkin is aggrieved that you have

^{*}Russian professional hunter.

[†]The Aleutian Islands were so called by early Russians.

not wrested more furs from the Islanders. This Kusain, who importuned me with attentions when last he was here, obtained his furs through unspeakable cruelties. His men unwarily spoke of their deeds on their return; and the officers of Lebedef-Lastochkin were hard put to it to mute the scandal. A rich cargo will excuse any crime in their eyes. Word of Kusain's deeds may yet get to our thrice gracious and benignant Empress and bring an Imperial emissary who would show Kusain even scantier mercy than he showed the wretched Islanders.

Pribylof read through the letter, his eyes glowing from the affectionate counsel of the woman Eugénie Falalei. Her intimate knowledge and frankness showed him how precarious was his standing with Lebedef-Lastochkin. Another bootless season, and he would lose the *Sv. Georgiy*, his employ with the powerful company, and all his reputation as "the pathfinder" of American waters. And his former rank in the Imperial navy was no longer open to him, since he had peremptorily quit the service to enter the exploration work which better suited his far-roving, adventurous spirit.

He re-read the letter and went on deck in time to give order for the anchor to be cast in the inner cove of Illiuliuk Harbor. Not a little to his surprise, Kiril Kusain's ship, the *Sv. Pavel i Sv. Petr*, a swift, two-masted galiot, was anchored there, along with a dozen ketches, *shitikis*, *lodkas*, and smaller craft of the *promyshleniki*.

But there was no salute when the *Sv. Georgiy* came to anchor between the two tiny islands, nor any welcoming at the landing, though Russians and Cossacks were clustered about the tents and turf houses, and a group of ship officers stood beside the *Ostrog* entrance. In wonderment Pribylof strode up to them.

"*Zdorovo!* What fortune?" asked Kusain, a stocky, swarthy man of mingled Cossack and Kamchatkan blood.

"Little enough," Pribylof answered. "Since last I touched here I have spent two months among the southern islands without finding hunting-grounds for Winter; and two more months in the sea to the south without finding any grounds at all. I go north, toward the mainland, for the Winter."

There was a general "Umph!" from all but Kusain. Pribylof looked around the circle of faces and saw nothing of sympathy or friendliness.

"They have heard," he said to himself, with a bitter thought of the times past when he had befriended more than one of that very group. There was Veranoff,

whose crew and cargo he had rescued from a Kamchatka reef, where Veranoff's sea-ignorance had wrecked his *Sv. Pavel*. There was Jolstykh, whose ship the *Sv. Petr* had been burned on Kadiak Island by the hostile *Kadiakmiut*, and its crew rescued only by Pribylof's timely and energetic aid. There was Lisiansky the Pole, whose ship—named after both of those exceedingly honored disciples—Pribylof had picked up when it was drifting helplessly among the Kuril reefs with all the crew down from scorbutic diseases. And Porfiri Torpornin, master of *promyshleniki* on Unalaska and *tchick* of Illiuliuk *Ostrog*, had been advanced solely on the word of the man to whom he now refused to say, "God's Favor!"

And there were others, masters of craft, with whom he had compared information about hunting-grounds or to whom he had given of his dependable knowledge of the fancifully charted Bering Sea. But that was in days past when rich cargoes and island discoveries kept him in favor with the grasping, all-powerful merchant kings of Okhotsk.

Banding words with none of them when he saw from what quarter the wind was blowing, Pribylof took Porfiri Torpornin aside, out of earshot of the curious.

"I have tried the South Islands for three Winters now," he began. "This Winter I sail north till the *Sv. Georgiy* can butt no further through the ice."

"Yes?" Torpornin said indifferently.

"Which will mean," the other continued, "that I shall need a good supply of stores, since one dares not take chances on supplies from the Indians or from game along the frozen coast."

"It is October," Torpornin observed, "and rather late to cross to Bolsheretsk and back again in time to find hunting-grounds."

"Who spoke of crossing to Bolsheretsk?" Pribylof asked sharply, suspecting what was to come.

"You have furs and to spare?" Torpornin countered. "To trade for your stores?"

"I have not."

"Then it seems you will have to sail for Bolsheretsk, if you are to get any stores."

"You gave me supplies last Autumn and were paid for them in the Spring."

"That was last Autumn," Torpornin observed dryly.

"But I shall give you a voucher on Lebedef-Lástochkin," Pribylof said, in exasperation at this sudden foiling of his plans.

"I don't care to take chances on Lebedef-Lastochkin repudiating shortly the actions of the present commander of the *Sv. Georgiy*," Torpornin said curtly.

Pribylof's eyes shot fire.

"Swine!" he flared, turning on his heel. "Your memory is short and your friendship shorter. Swine!"

He pointed with his sword to include the whole group of officers; and strode off down to the landing.

A quarter hour after Pribylof was back in his cabin and was studying his own charts of the northern islands, Kiril Kusain came on board to speak with him. Never very much taken with the swarthy Cossack, Pribylof was surprized at the visit. Besides, he was in an irritable quandary over the question of a hunting-ground. Kusain was friendly, unwontedly so.

"You are going north this season?" he began suavely.

Pribylof nodded.

"Where I should have gone last Winter," Kusain remarked.

Pribylof looked his question.

"I had word, reliable word, of good hunting-grounds north of Kadiak, on the mainland."

"You will go there this Winter, I presume," said Pribylof.

Kusain shook his head.

"My native hunters and *promyshleniki* are already placed. On Afognak Island."

Pribylof reflected a moment. "Where on the mainland are the hunting-grounds? How do you know of them?"

Kusain talked the while he drew a map.

"I heard of them from a *Kalekhtamiut tyone* last Summer. He told me tales of almost impossible numbers of seals, small furs, and foxes of better grade than these blue island *pestsi*. He had peltry to bolster up his statement. The great advantage of the location is that the rivers will draw trade from three hundred versts inland, and you will have commerce with all the coast tribes of the upper Inlet. Again this Summer I heard rumors of the rich coast. It is here."

He indicated on the map a position between the mouth of Kinik River and Turn-Again Arm of Cook's Inlet.

"But the natives," Pribylof objected, as he studied the chart. "Those Mainlanders are crafty and warlike. They are a different breed from Aleuts. Of course, if they have not been visited by white men and

taught how to murder and fight fire with fire, or if they are keen to trade, they will not cause trouble."

"They have not been visited," Kusain affirmed stoutly. "No *promyshleniki* have landed along that entire coast. The natives will be most peaceful."

"Why," Pribylof asked, suddenly suspicious, "why do you tell me of this?"

He looked at the Cossack narrowly. Kusain returned his steady gaze.

"I expect five shares of the total catch," he said evenly. "Being personal gain to me, that would amount to as much as my share if I myself went."

"And the natives have never been visited and are peaceful?"

"I do not believe—I know it."

"Your demand is fair enough. Shall I write an agreement?"

"Your word is more than sufficient," Kusain returned courteously, rising. "You are sailing at once?"

"Before nightfall. I shall see you here in the Spring?"

Kusain nodded and held out his hand. After he was gone, Pribylof re-read the letter from Eugénie Falalei concerning the Cossack, and Lebedef-Lastochkin's hint of him as the next commander of the *Sv. Georgiy*.

"Surely she is wrong, and Lebedef merely threatening," he concluded. "Of the whole clique Kusain alone is decent. My ill luck would be good fortune to him; yet he tells me of hunting grounds!"

When he went on deck to give orders for a repair or two and for hasty sailing from the unfriendly *Ostrog*, Pribylof found that Rucker, his Saxon mate, had gone ashore in a *bidarka* without asking leave. It was deep dark and the repairs were made before the mate came on board.

For the second time that day old Aleut Matzah stood in the door of Pribylof's cabin.

"Young sir—" he began; and from his voice Pribylof knew he was going to plead for a voyage to the fog-wrapped Islands which were never off his lips or out of his imaginative mind.

"Be silent of them!" said Pribylof, more sharply than was his wont to address the faithful native hunter; for Matzah's pleadings had recently become wearisome. "We are sailing north, to the mainland beyond Kadiak, for the Winter."

But Matzah did not move. He glanced

behind him in the companionway, and lowered his voice when he spoke again.

"Then you had best go up to the men and hear what they are whispering about."

"Is it Rucker stirring trouble again?"

Matzah nodded gravely and disappeared. Pribylof followed him on deck. Immediately, from a black patch of men aft, the mate detached himself and came toward the commander.

"Why is the canvas not set?" Pribylof demanded.

"Because the *Sv. Georgiy* does not sail!" Rucker answered insolently. "We have heard you mean to go north. We will not sail north. Or south, without ship-stores a-plenty."

The other men were drawing close. Even before the words were out of Rucker's mouth, Pribylof was upon him like a cougar. Barehanded, he stretched the mate senseless on the deck; and faced the crew with sword out. Behind him he knew that Matzah with a dozen native hunters were crouched in cover of a deck *bidarra*.

"We are sailing north tonight," he said in a voice as steely as his blade. "And the first to utter a word of mutiny will be dangled from a spar."

He paused a moment, eyeing scornfully the averted faces and shuffling feet; then adroitly he addressed a towering Kamchatkan who was in front of the wavering mob with a heavy timber in his hand.

"Davidof, do you be mate in place of this lout; and see to the setting of the sails."

It was but Pribylof's way of checking a rebellion by putting power in the hands of a natural leader of men; for responsibility ever breeds trustiness and moderation. The crew gasped at their very leader being set in command. Davidof began bawling his orders lustily, after he awoke from his own amazement.

Thus was the mutiny checked and the *Sv. Georgiy* headed north for a Winter on the wilderness coast.

Pribylof smiled to himself as he plastered a knuckle in his cabin.



A QUIET, rock-bound, horseshoe cove for the *Sv. Georgiy*, out of reach of the swift, blue-gray tides rushing up and down the great Inlet. Underkeel a blue clay bottom which lent its color to the toppling waves. To the west a waste of waters over which a setting sun played in

every hue. To north and south a rocky land-wash, alive with the spatter of wings: gull and plover, auk, curlew and the stately emperor goose. To the east the untrodden mainland; the "Bolshaia Zemlia," or Great Land Westward, whither Russian eyes had been turned almost for a century; a solemn wilderness; a grave perhaps; perhaps a land of untold treasures to the adventurer of strong heart and purpose.

Beyond the land-wash a pebbly beach ran back to a range of wooded foot-hills; behind these, mountains reared up their white peaks; behind these lay a range still nobler, glacier-girt, the dull thunder of whose avalanches was audible at seventy versts. Three furlongs from the cove where the *Sv. Georgiy* rode at quiet anchor, a river—small for the country but mighty even so—pointed a long yellow-and-white finger out into the inlet; yellow with foot-hill sand and white with silt from glacial torrents.

At earliest dawn the next morning after their arrival, Pribylof went ashore with two *bidarras* and two-score men. Very wisely he took the Saxon Rucker with him, lest the former mate should brew trouble with the crew. A ship-guard of thirty men, Davidof the Kamchatkan in charge, were given strict orders against a surprise attack from a fleet of native skin-boats. The ship guns were trained upon the shore to cover a possible hasty retreat of the reconnoitering party. Pribylof's men bristled with muskets, pistols, swords and spears; and for additional protection they took along a small iron cannon and two copper half-pound falconets.

The Aleut hunters, frightened by the strange country and their traditions of the warlike Mainlanders, flatly refused to leave the party and scout. Not even old Matzah, himself fearless in the service of his master, could stir them. Hence Pribylof was compelled to move slowly, searching out with his spy-glass every place likely for ambush. Signs of the natives were all about: ribs of skin-boats rotting on the beach; skeleton poles of Summer teepees; lonely graves on the crowns of low hills. But not a sign or stir of the coast tribes.

The course that day was south along the land-wash. As a place for wintering, Pribylof had never seen a better in all his exploring and hunting far and wide among the Islands. In its sheltered cove the *Sv. Georgiy* would ride out the fiercest *poorga* of Winter. At easy distance from the land-wash, wood for

fires was abundant. The waters swarmed with star-fish, cod, and grayling; and the estuaries with fat candle-fish, which could be dried and used for lighting in place of seal-oil. Anti-scurvy plants, in which Pribylof placed more faith than in the usual sour dough or yeast *kvass*, grew abundantly on every hand. Bear paths worn in the white moss led along the creek banks; tracks of large deer were countless.

The Cossack *promyshleniki*, born hunters that they were back through seven generations when the great sable hunt began on the Volga and led ever eastward to Kamchatka whence it leaped across the sea to Russian America,* were wild over the promising signs of seals, foxes, and smaller furs. A rich land it was, beyond all doubt; richer than anything they had seen in the southern islands. Counting nothing on trade with the natives, by their own unaided hunting they would take a cargo of splendid furs back to Bolsheretsk at the coming of Spring; and wassail for a year on their tithe of the catch.

At the hasty noon meal Pribylof stepped upon a rock and addressed his men. He pointed out how strategic was their location for trade with all the natives of the Inlet and with the inland tribes that would come down the river. He counceled the need of kindly and humane dealing with the Indians, lest one overt act should make them hostile against the white strangers. The effect of his speech on the crew warmed Pribylof's heart. To a man his company spoke up, pledging themselves to abstain from unfair dealing, from petty quarrels and from the native women.

They camped that night fifteen miles from the *Sv. Georgiy*. The next day they cut east into the hills and then north, parallel with the coast; charting the country as they went; mapping out hunting-grounds, deciding upon the location of their Winter *artels*, or stations; and noting everywhere signs of teeming fur animals. On the fourth day they headed back to the coast. In a freshly deserted village ten miles north of the ship they came across the first living native—a boy of twelve lying with a broken leg in a sod-walled, dirt-roofed hut. Leaving tokens of friendly intent in the skin *kashima* of the village, Pribylof took the boy

away with him, to teach him Russian and thus have an interpreter when the tribes should appear. Their strange vanishing puzzled him. He spoke of it to Matzah.

The old Aleut shook his head mistrustfully.

"They were watching from the hills and kept out of our sight. There is warning in that for us."



"There were no Indians near us," Pribylof interrupted. "Else we would have seen them."

"In the daytime I have heard the call of foxes," Matzah said slowly, "and at night the hooting of owls. I have lived too long to be fooled thus. They were near us every hour of the day and night."

"Perhaps you did hear signals of a warrior or two. But at this season, the main body of Indians have gone back into the hills to spear caribou for Winter. The few that have seen us are frightened at strangers, and unwilling to show themselves except in numbers."

"Among my people there is a legend of the bloody *Kinikmiut*—"

"Which is like the legend of your Fog Islands, Matzah," Pribylof interposed. "Why should they be hostile to white men, since no ship ever has traded on this coast? You know, as do I, that it is not their nature, warlike though they be. We will wait. But no croaking of danger, which will come to the ears of the men."

"I am no crow," Matzah retorted in dudgeon, "but an eagle that sees things far off and yet to come."

On the fifth day Pribylof's party returned to the ship.

The November snows were at hand; furs were priming; and the time was close when trap-lines had to be tailed out if the first bitter *poorga* were not to clew up and hide likely locations. But with Gavrillo Pribylof, safety for the ship and comfort for his

*In mid-sixteenth century the Cossacks, to escape Russian dominion, set out eastward, hunting the sable and conquering the country as they went. It took them almost a century to reach Kamchatka.

men came first. At the very side of the *Sv. Georgiy* a *kekour*, or rock citadel, rearing above the reach of high tides, made a natural fortress. A stone wall was built around its edge; and within this circle the ship carpenter's men knocked together three snug Winter huts. Four cannon loaded with grape and ready for the priming were mounted at the four corners; and sentries walked the walls from dusk to dawn.

Meanwhile the Aleuts, plucking up faint courage, ventured into the foot-hills and gathered berries, to be frozen in ice and kept till mid-Winter to help ward off the dreaded scurvy. Hunting parties of *promyshleniki* went farther and farther from the ship to bring in deer and bear. Strings of plucked and sun-blackened wild-fowl hung along the rock wall. At least the *Sv. Georgiy* would not know hunger that Winter.

If only the natives would come! Three weeks had passed; the Winter's food was gathered; parkas, racquets and *torbossas* were made; and the first tracking snow had fallen, but not a sign of the Mainlanders. The lad who had been captured could talk a little now with his captors; but stubbornly he refused to say a word about his kinsmen. Not all the adroit questioning of Pribylof yielded a glint of information.

Rücker with twelve *promyshleniki* and three Aleuts went fifteen miles up the coast, built quarters, strung out fur paths, and settled down to taking furs. Davidof the Kamchatkan with ten hunters and two Aleuts went a dozen miles down the coast and established his *artel*. Pribylof's remaining hunters spread up-river almost to the mountains, and went in *bidarras* to seal islands out in the Inlet. But always there was a heavy guard on the *Sv. Georgiy*; and the men in Pribylof's charge returned each night to the *kekour*.

Came Christmas. Davidof's party, trapping in a rocky valley full of caves and gorges, had taken a good haul of precious foxes; and the hunger season when foxes could be baited was still to come. Rücker had labored as if to atone for his former misdeeds. When Pribylof visited his quarters on the day before Christmas, he had a rich peltry of late seals from the land-wash, mink from the inland muskeg, foxes, wolverines and marten from the foot-hills. Neither of the outlying parties had seen signs of Mainlanders save for an occasional track of a single warrior. The snow would have be-

trayed the presence of a large body of Indians, if they had been hovering about. The mistrust even of Matzah was allayed. Pribylof marveled that the facts had fallen true to the every word of Kiril Kusain.

Then, on the day of Nativity, a blinding *poorga* broke over the mountains and blasted the coast. It was an Aeolian fury laden with sleety spiculae. None of the hunters could stir out that day. By night the terrific cold had laid down ice in the horse-shoe cove. In the huts carousal reigned until midnight, before the men lay down to dream of Little Mother Volga or their native steppes, or of the solemn pageantry of Christmas-tide in the church at home. Then silently, the war-party came across the ice and climbed the rock.

Pribylof was awakened by the death shriek of a sentry falling from his post with an arrow through his throat. A spear hurtled through the bladder window and quivered head-deep in the wall. A savage howl from ten-score throats split the roar of the *poorga*.

"We must gain one of the other huts," cried Pribylof, as the war whoop told him of a native onslaught.

He half-dragged from their covers the two men who stayed with him; and before their eyes were fairly open, he had thrust swords into their hands and armed them toward the door.

"And fire this hut. A good torch for this work of —!"

With a kick, he scattered live coals into kindling fagots in a corner. His two men, seizing muskets, began firing through the door at dark forms surging over the rock wall.

"Save your pistols!" Pribylof ordered them sharply. "We must fire when we near the door of the other hut, so that our fellows will know us and will not shoot us down. Dmitri, and Popov—swords out! Together—"

With his own weapon Gavril cut a way through the tangle of Mainlanders. His two men slashed beside him. In the sleety blackness they were in front of the larger hut in a twinkling, before the Indians could tell friend from foe or realize a sortie was being made.

But beside the door of the hut the warriors ringed them about. Dmitri and Popov held off the charge with their pistols while Pribylof shouted for the door to be opened.

A shout answered within, the door flung open, the three leaped inside—Dmitri with a shoulder shattered from stroke of a stone ax.

At the low window Pribylof set half his *promyshleniki* to firing with pistol and musket. The rest feverishly reloaded weapons. The storm wind fanned the burning hut; in but a minute the whole *kekour* was illumined. Scores of almost naked savages were desperately assaulting the houses. From the other large hut came a steady firing; bullets found their mark now. The front of the Indian charge wilted; but others swarmed over the rock wall and fearlessly assaulted the huts. Fire spears arched upon the roofs and sizzled in a providential coating of ice and snow.

"We must clear them off the *kekour*. They will burn the houses," Pribylof commanded sharply. "Swords and pistols. Half of you to the north corner with me; half to the south and fire the gun there."

As the musketry ceased, the Indians closed upon the hut. In the other house the *promyshleniki*, guessing shrewdly what was to happen, poured a withering hail into the mob attacking in front, so that Pribylof's men could issue, form, and charge. The Russians swept the savages before them. The other party poured out of the other hut and fell upon the Indians behind the houses. The flash and roar of the cannon which Pribylof fired with his own hand struck terror into the natives. The other gun poured its cannister into a mass down upon the ice. Instead of swarming up the rock walls, the warriors now leaped panic-stricken from the *kekour* and fled howling. The citadel was cleared.

A powder charge flared from the deck of the *Sv. Georgiy*.

"Popov!" cried the commander. "Take ten men and gain the ship. The guard there is attacked."

Popov and a knot of hunters slid down the rear wall upon the ice. A minute later, and muskets were cracking on the *Sv. Georgiy*. The ship pieces, loosed from their tarpaulins, began vomiting grape and chain-shot. From the *kekour* wall muskets and cannon swept the ice, doing fearful, if random, destruction. The howling faded; was swallowed up in the roar of the *poorga*. The attack had failed.

With the earliest gray of dawn Pribylof assembled his men for the count. Five there were whose voices did not answer

when their names were called. As many others were wounded, though able to help defend the *kekour* if need arose. Of the twelve Aleuts, only old Matzah was present. Hence, of his own party Pribylof had twenty sound men left, out of thirty hunters and a dozen natives. But the Mainlanders had suffered a merciless loss. Two-score of their dead lay on the *kekour* floor. How many had been killed on the ice was not even to be guessed at, for all during the night silent parties had come and gone, carrying away the slain to hide their loss. They had planned and organized to wipe out the Russians, to capture, plunder, and burn the ship; for when they fled they had left behind them dried and oil-soaked moss, packets of sulfur, and notched-pole ladders for scaling.

When it was discovered that the Aleuts were gone, there was an outcry from the *promyshleniki*.

Popov spoke up hoarsely:

"It is they who have hatched this plot and betrayed us. Now they have joined the pack. But still one of them stays—to watch us—to deliver us—"

When he raised his voice and arm to lead a rush, Pribylof drew a pistol.

"I would be loathe to shoot a brave man," he threatened. "But whoever touches Matzah dies. Wherever the other Aleuts may be, and whether they be guilty or not, he is innocent as you, Popov, or I. Where are your fellows, Matzah?"

"They are cowards!" the old Aleut answered. "They crouched in the huts until the men went out to sweep away the Mainlanders. Then they fled from the *kekour*, and now must be hiding along the shore. I will go bring them in."

"There is no time to lay blame anywhere," said Pribylof, as Matzah strode down the rock and shoreward. "If any one be guilty of these deaths, his guilt will out. We must save the men of Davidof's camp, and Rucker's. After the sharp lesson of last night they will not lightly attack us again. Therefore twelve of us must go down the coast within the hour. The eight men here shall guard the ship. Perhaps Matzah will bring back his Aleuts. Who volunteers to go?"

It was a question, with Pribylof, of choosing his dozen from the entire twenty men.

Matzah came back almost immediately

with eight of his hunters and proof of the Aleuts' innocence in that the other four had been discovered in their hiding places and killed. The old Islander went with the rescue party.

Not a Mainlander warrior was in sight. The *poorga* had laid; the sky cleared; a still, fierce, crackling cold succeeded. The sun shone copperish and low on the horizon. Parhelia—mock suns of magical beauty—hung in the sky. Not a sound of bird or animal broke the frosty silence; the whining crunch of a racquet could be heard a half mile. On the cleanly swept land-wash there was little danger of ambush; Pribylof's party went swiftly. In two hours they stopped for a breath on a coastal ridge two miles from the Davidof *artel*. They heard no sounds of fighting ahead of them.

"A bad omen," said Pribylof. "We should be hearing the sound of guns. And it is a bad sign, too, that we have not been attacked."

"Perhaps only the ship was assaulted," a man spoke up.

"Let us hope," Pribylof answered.

But hope was dashed, a mile from the camp, by a broad path of many egg-tailed snow-shoes. The men broke into a run, with muskets ready and eyes alert against attack. Presently, from a knoll, they looked down into the camp.

"Stay here!" Pribylof commanded. "Davidof and his men are beyond our aid, save that of our prayers. I will go down alone. Let no man stir till I return."

Stout-hearted as he knew his *promyshleniki* to be, he judged it wiser for them not to see the camp.

He himself approached it trembling. In a patch of shrub three rods away, the two Aleuts, escaped thus far, lay in a grotesque huddle, pierced through with heavy spears and with a dozen copper-tipped arrows. The log house was burned and looted of its iron. Several of the *promyshleniki* had died within; three others lay on the snow a few paces distant. The snow about Davidof was splotched with red; and from the Mainlanders having eaten his heart, Pribylof could judge of the great fight he had fought.

He wasted no time or useless sympathy, but returned quickly to his men.

"We can not stop now to bury them," he said brusquely. "We must go north to Rucker's *artel*. He has more men and a

stronger camp. It may hap he has been able to hold them off. It will save us many miles if we go straight north instead of following around the coast. And tonight, if we are in the hills, we can find a rock cave to stay in."

The party faced toward the north. They had gone scarcely three miles, but far enough to show that they were not returning to the ship, when Matzah stopped and held up a hand. Ahead of them a wolf howl quavered and was answered farther back in the hills.

"A signal!" he announced.

"A good omen!" Pribylof cried. "If they attack us now it will show that Rucker's men are holding out still. They will try to keep us from joining."

His words put new heart into his men. For all their increased caution now, they went more swiftly. There was danger of ambush in the gorges and across the brows of the rocky hills; but Matzah scouted a quarter-mile ahead, under protection of the falconets. The wolf signals came closer; they were on every side before the afternoon was half-gone. Twice Pribylof caught a glimpse of Mainland warriors watching from a knoll. They began to show themselves; to close in. Half an hour before dusk, Matzah ahead in a small valley signaled he had found a camp. The *promyshleniki* reached him only after dropping a dozen Mainlanders who had pressed near enough for a long arrow-shot.

The camp was a dry cave, opening upon a ledge ten feet above ground—a place easy to defend against scores. Pribylof half-closed the cave mouth with rocks, set up the tiny cannon, dragged in dead spruces for a fire, ordered hot food passed around, and then made half his men sleep while the others watched.

When the early dark fell, it seemed the gorge was filled with Mainland warriors. Arrows, spears and harpoons searched out crevices in the rock barrier, and wounded two men slightly. Regularly, at ten-minute intervals, Pribylof's watchers answered with a volley of musketry and often with canister from the guns. The savages could not face the strange and terrifying weapons. Time after time that night a well directed volley broke up a gathering rush. And though at midnight the exhausted watchers were relieved by the other *promyshleniki*, who had slept through the fighting, Pribylof

himself was awake all that night, encouraging his men in low words and guarding against native cunning.

The next morning, as soon as it was light enough for a musket ball to find its mark at a hundred paces, he ordered the advance. The Mainlanders hung close to them, yelling like fiends, dancing and brandishing their weapons. By this time Matzah had noted that the enemy were of several different tribes.

"It was a Kenaimiut bow which shot that arrow," he said once as an ivory-tipped barb, arched incredibly high and far, *whispered* into the snow behind him. "And the copper-tipped arrows are of the Chucagh-i-tannah, to the east of us."

"We have powder and ball for all the demons of —!" Pribylof growled in answer.

As the day wore on and the party neared Rucker's *artel*, the Mainlanders attacked more recklessly. Twice Pribylof had to stop, dig his men into snow barricades, and check savage rushes. By mid-afternoon they were within three miles of the north camp. They stopped on a hill to listen.

Far off and faint, they heard the splutter of muskets.

Thereafter Gavriilo Pribylof, with the flat of his sword, had to beat caution and restraint into his impetuous *promyshleniki*.

Fighting every rod of the way, they neared the north camp that evening, carrying two of their number. So thick were the savages about Rucker's *artel* that, had they been courageous enough to face muskets or falconets at short range, they could have swept over the white men like a wave and ended it all quickly. At the last moment, in a desperate effort to keep the forces apart, they massed between Pribylof's party and the stone house of Rucker. The Saxon sallied out with his remnant of five men; Pribylof swept the mass with grape and musketry. The Mainlanders wavered, split, and fled. Triumphantly the rescue party, assailed with blessings in name of all the saints, entered the besieged camp.



THE next day the two parties reached the *Sv. Georgiy*.

And the next day they went down the coast to bury Davidof the Kamchatkan and his men.

That evening Gavriilo Pribylof sat in his cabin drinking tea from the silver samovar.

Old Matzah rapped and entered. In his hand he held a dagger.

"What now?" queried the commander.

"There is muttering still among the white hunters that my Aleuts hatched this evil. They are timid in a battle, but they are not traitors. Therefore I have kept my eyes open for a sign. I am an eagle and my eyes see things which others see not."

He passed the weapon to Pribylof.

"A trade dagger," said Gavriilo. "Kamchatka made. What of it?"

"I found it on the body of a Mainlander in front of Rucker's *artel*."

Pribylof started to his feet. "Do you lie?"

"I speak truth."

A tense moment passed. Pribylof stood like a statue, all color gone from his face.

"Bring the boy interpreter, and the elder of our two wounded prisoners," he ordered tersely.

Matzah returned quickly with the two Mainlanders. The prisoner was a man of forty, with a rifle wound in his shoulder. He blanched with fear when he saw the dagger in Pribylof's hands.

"You will live to go back to your people again," the latter said kindly, "if you but speak truth."

He motioned for the native to sit on a fur piece and lean his wounded shoulder against a timber. The lad translated in a boyish treble.

"I would know," said Pribylof slowly, "what tribes were among those that attacked us."

"I am Kinikmiut," answered the man. "My people hunt along this coast. Their warriors, and the Kenaimiut, the Chucagh-i-tannah, and the Aglegmuiut were the tribes that fought against you."

Old Matzah nodded.

"They were as many as the days of three years," continued the prisoner. "When the great white-winged canoe first came, it was my tribe which saw it. We moved back to the hills, and watched the white men until we saw the great *oomiak* was not going to row away. Then the shaman sent a story-stick to the Kenaimiut, the Chucagh-i-tannah, and to the Aglegmuiut; and all their warriors gathered to help us."

"How came it that at the same hour of the same night our three camps were attacked?" asked Pribylof.

"Our warriors were divided into three bands, one twice as great as the two others.

To the chief of each band was given a bundle of arrows. Each night an arrow was burned. When the last arrow was gone, that was the night when we leaped from hiding in the hills."

"We came to your coast in peace," said Pribylof. "We came to trade like men, and you fell upon us at night without warning like a wolf-pack. What cause was there for this? What evil had we done you?"

"Your white brothers had done us great evil," the prisoner answered.

"My brothers are many, and their white-winged canoes are like the aspen leaves in number. How can I know what evil they have done you unless you speak it?"

"Four seasons ago, a moon earlier than the day when your great *oomiak* came, another one smaller but very great came to our coast. That was beyond your north camp. We welcomed the strangers as almost-brothers. We traded our furs for their beads and knives, like the one in your hand, and the cloth of your white brothers. We gave them fish and deer meat for food. We helped them trap. But after a moon they began to quarrel with our men.

"They gave us a drink called 'houtchini,' which made us madmen. They robbed us of our furs without giving us even a handful of beads in return. They seized twenty of our girls and took them to the great *oomiak*. One girl escaped by swimming to shore; and told us tales which set our ears tingling. Our warriors, the Kinikmiut, banded and surrounded the great *oomiak* in our skin boats. We asked that our girls be returned to us. For answer came a flash of fire and sound of thunder which killed ten of our men and sank three boats. We fled; but word was sent to the Kenaimiut, the Chucagh-i-tannah, and the Aglegmiut to come and aid us.

"Your white brothers captured a prisoner, wounded even as I am, and tortured him with hot irons until he told our plans. He was sent back to us suffering from a sickness which left marks on his face and which later swept away a third of our people. But the white men fled before we could attack.

"From this very rock we shouted to them as the great *oomiak* passed, and hurled threats of what we would do if ever they came again. Thus we suffered, and have waited for our revenge."

"Their chief?" demanded Pribylof throatily. "Was he a short man, with hair like

that of the red fox and a long knife-scar across his throat?"

The prisoner nodded gravely.

Pribylof turned to Matzah.

"Take them away. Tomorrow give them presents and send them back to their people. The blood of our slain is not upon them—"

He paced the cabin, his features working and livid. And then he paused before the Ikon; made a genuflection.

"By the One and One Only God," he breathed passionately, "the blood of Davidof and a score of strong men is on the hands of Kiril Kusain; and their murder is at his door. My misfortune is his fortune; and these deaths his gain. May I live—" his voice choked.



WITH his spy-glass, Gavril Pribylof apprehensively watched the sail which was bearing down upon him from the north. The lines of the ship told him nothing—she might be English or French, Spanish or Siberian Russian. But in the handling of her there was cause for suspicion; a master sailor was commanding her, and master sailors were rare on Bering Sea Russian boats. Set with all the sail her masts would carry, the *Sv. Georgiy* was clipping south before a strong northwest wind. In spite of her sturdiness she was a ship that could drop over the horizon from most privateers; and Pribylof, himself a master sailor, knew intimately the vagaries of surface currents and puzzling winds of the sea he was running through.

But the strange sail crept closer and closer. A stern chase may be a long chase; but the sail had been sighted at dawn, and the sun was not yet straight overhead.

When the strange vessel was near enough, it began signaling after the fashion prescribed by the *ukase*. Pribylof answered, but slacked not a whit. They ran through the sail semaphore; all the while the pursuing ship gained on the *Sv. Georgiy*.

"A privateer," said Pribylof to himself. "Assuredly the captain has framed a copy of that *ukase* in ivory for his cabin wall. Dark settles three minutes later tonight than yesterday eve; perhaps those three minutes will lose me the *Sv. Georgiy*. If there were sea-fighting blood in my men, I would let him close and try conclusions. He looks but lightly armed."

An hour before dark the stranger came within hailing distance. A voice in Russian

shouted the *ukase* words. With a sardonic smile Pribylof answered. A flip of the canvas, hung over the bows, had momentarily revealed to him that the ship was the Stockholm *Hermes*! But he played the mimic game through, and clipped along till a peremptory signal shot brought him around.

According to the *ukase's* emphatic injunctions, he was supposed to destroy all ship papers, all charts of the islands and all written information of any kind; to scuttle the ship if an attacking party tried to board; and to embark the crew in *bidarras*. But all the valuable papers Pribylof habitually kept hidden in a hollow cabin timber; and embarking the men in *bidarras*, when they were in boreal waters three hundred miles from any possible land, was not to his mind, *ukase* or no *ukase*.

The boarding-party came bouncing across the water. The captain himself was one of them. He was an athletic Englishman in his late thirties, ruddy-faced, smartly dressed, and wearing a sword pendant argent decoration. His motley crew were Dutchmen, Hanseamen, Danes, and Swedes. Pribylof, surveying the long boats through his spy-glass, blessed himself in surprise. The spy-glass fell from his hands and broke. He was at the lines when the Englishman climbed over. The latter stared hard at him, blinked his gray eyes twice, wetted his lips. Pribylof made a slight gesture. The skipper caught control of himself.

"Stockholm *Hermes*, Captain Nightengale," he said crisply, but with a hidden laugh in his voice.

"Bolsheretsk *Sv. Georgiy*, trader, Gavriolo Pribylof," said Pribylof, bowing. "Our business, sir—for I take it we have business together—will not suffer from a glass of tea in my cabin."

Nightengale bowed acceptance. They went below.

When the door of the cabin closed behind them, Nightengale clapped a hand on Pribylof's shoulder. They shook heartily, in the manner of friends long parted.

"By all the Olympian gods!" exclaimed the Englishman, when he could find words. "For eight years I've been scouring the Baltic and wondering what had happened to Gavriolo Pribylof or where he had run off to. I thought the gods loved him and he died young. And then to find him at the end of the world after chasing him for ten mortal hours! Man, man! You're out of

her Imperial Highness' Navy? Turned merchant prince, fur thief, or what? Speak up, Gavriolo!"

"I left the Imperial Navy a six-month after I last saw you," said Pribylof. "Since '78 I've been exploring for hunting-grounds, taking a few furs, and charting islands."

"A good enough ship, this *Sv. Georgiy*. Does she belong to you?"

"Likely I shall not even be commander of her for long."

"Is the story behind that sentence too long to tell?"

"Not at all. A case of having friends in fair weather but none in foul. Adding islands to the Imperial Domain finds no favor in my company's eyes, for all the patriotic reports it sends to St. Petersburg. I was foolish enough to search out hunting-grounds for other ships of the company instead of taking home cargoes myself. A few seasons of ill luck, and Lebedef-Lastochkin has all but repudiated me.

"The other captains, sycophants to a man, take their cue from him, and turn me the cold shoulder. It has been one step after another downward. First, I find no new islands. Then, I have had bad luck three seasons hunting. Then Lebedef threatens to give the *Sv. Georgiy* to another of his captains. The sycophant commanders refuse stores and sow mutiny among my men. Worst of all was the disaster last Winter. I'll have no ship when I return to Kamchatka. And the Admiralty College has little use for me after my quitting the Imperial Service."

"Ill luck?" exclaimed Nightengale. "How could *you* have that?"

"For example, this Winter: A trading captain told me of a rich fur coast, north and east of here. It was a plot. I started to Winter there. The savages killed a third of my men; I got no furs. We had a battle at Christmas time. Since then the ship has been attacked almost daily. It was a Winter of horror, frozen there in the ice. When Spring came, it brought more trouble. With several men down from scurvy and no stores at all, the crew demanded that I sail straight across to Bolsheretsk. A Saxon mate is brewing mutiny, despite that I saved his life from a horde of Mainlanders last Winter. As soon as the ice released the ship, I started south. Before the *Sv. Georgiy* goes to Bolsheretsk, I have a duty at Illiuliuk."

"With enemies watching you, I understand your not knowing me when I came aboard. The *ukase* is quite definite about certain things."

Pribylof smiled, but grew serious again.

"The less that Saxon knows, the less he can tell when we reach port. The College would not even make me *stoorman* if it knew."

"I can give you biscuit, meal, and other supplies," Nightengale offered, thinking. "They are Russian," he added with a smile.

"Since you are good enough not to ask for information about our *Ostrog*s, men, and ships, I am compelled not to ask what vessels of ours you have—met. If you can give me supplies, it will delay the time when I have to go in to port."

"Assuredly. And you can hatch in the meanwhile a pretext for my giving them to you. But certainly it will not be well for you to go to Illiuliuk and say you have stores from the *Hermes* on board."

"Why?"

"Two weeks ago I was cruising around Unalaska and—ah, met several ships, *skitiks* most of them, but two three-mast traders also. The cursed lot of them scuttled their ships and pulled ashore in *bidarras*. No furs, no fight out of any of them. I landed at one *Ostrog*—not the main one at Illiuliuk—and took a load of stores. Then one day I chased a small two-masted galiot into the harbor, and chatted a while with the Redoubt guns there. They are blessing me at the fort."

"No doubt," said Pribylof. "But what was the name of the small trader?"

Nightengale laughed.

"What could it be? Either the *Sv. Pavel*, or the *Sv. Petr*, or the *Sv. Pavel i Sv. Petr* or the *Sv. Petr i Sv. Pavel*. The galiot was the *Sv. Pavel i Sv. Petr*!"

"Ha!" Pribylof exclaimed, half-rising. "Kusain at Illiuliuk! Then indeed I have business there. It is more luck than I have had in years."

"You are riddling," said Nightengale, mystified.

"Only this," Pribylof answered; "if you had laid hands on Kiril Kusain, I would quarter you with a falchion in this cabin for all you restock my ship and hand it back to me with a bow."

"H'm," Nightengale snorted. "A friend of yours?"

"Indeed a friend," said Pribylof with dry

irony in his voice. "When I last touched at Illiuliuk word had got out that Lebedef-Lastochkin was going to release me from command and give the *Sv. Georgiy* to Kiril Kusain. But instead of treating me coldly, as the other officers did, he visited me on board ship and gave me valuable information. How is that for a man who stood to profit by my misfortune?"

"Rare friendship, sooth. A kind to be rewarded. I hope I meet the galiot again."

"You know now my duty at Illiuliuk."

Over a samovar of tea, details about the supplies were arranged. They included hard bread, groats, ten barrels of salt fish, one hundred buckets of brandy, butter, salt, meat and oatmeal—ample stores for a six-month voyage. Nightengale went back to the *Hermes*. Three boat-loads were swung aboard the *Sv. Georgiy*, the crew of the latter blankly mystified at this strange twist of affairs. At dusk the ships parted company with a salute.

That evening Matzah again rapped at the cabin door.

"We are but a little way, young sir—not more than the voyage of two days—from the islands," the old Aleut began.

"If you prate about them again, I will put you over the side in a *bidarka* with a biscuit and mouthful of water, and let you try finding them by yourself."

"You would do well, young sir, to listen."

"You would do better, old fool, to be silent."

Matzah failed to catch the lightness in Pribylof's tone. He bowed his head, chagrined and hurt.

"Come," the commander said kindly. "Unruffle your feathers. I did only jest. What did you come to tell me?"

"That your men are talking strange things among themselves. They know an enemy ship captured them this afternoon and turned them free again, with food and wine."

"What else do they know?"

"Nothing. One man says 'no,' the other 'yes,' about the same thing."

"Then what is there to worry about? What happened this afternoon is not for them to know."

"But one man *knows*!" Matzah announced.

"How can that be? Knows what?"

Matzah shook his head.

"It is a strange thing. I can not unravel

it. But this afternoon, while you were talking with the English *Tchick*, some one had long ears outside your cabin door."

Pribylof started to his feet in astonishment.

"Rücker!"

"I myself saw him. I am an eagle and see many things. His face wore an evil smile when he slunk away."

The old Aleut left silently, as Pribylof arose and began pacing the cabin.

"It seemed this afternoon that my ill luck had broken," he said half-aloud. "This seeming fortune, this meeting with Nightengale, is another of the downward steps, and almost the last. For now it will be known I have treated with the enemy and made a traitor of myself. Mayhap, before this business is through, I shall hang from a spar!"



FOR half a day the *Sv. Georgiy* hovered out of sight of the northwest coast of Unalaska. When darkness fell, the ship darted toward the land. It lacked an hour of midnight when anchor was dropped cautiously in the outer harbor of Illiuliuk. The crew—no longer grumbling from short food or lack of *vodka*—sprawled sleepily on the deck, under orders to make no sound or show a light before the dawn.

In his cabin, standing nude, Gavriilo Pribylof submitted to the ochre, vermilion, and down-powder decorations of Matzah; and donned the skin garment which the old Aleut produced. Noiselessly they went on deck. Noiselessly Matzah's native hunters lowered a deck *bidarra* and pulled away from the *Sv. Georgiy* toward the *Ostrog* landing. They passed it and rowed three hundred yards up the little salmon river. The Aleuts donned each a grinning wooden mask; Pribylof the skin of a wolf's head with ears sharply erect. They were unarmed; only the Aleut that was Pribylof wore a blade.

"What a guard they keep!" he muttered, as they left the landing unchallenged, "for an *Ostrog* in a savage country and beset with hostile ships. Were I a revengeful chief I could slit a hundred throats before morning; and were I Nightengale I could take the Redoubt without losing a man!"

Silently they gained the rear of the stockade, a few hundred yards from the landing. A Cossack guard, stupefied with *houthini* or *kvass* or both, almost stumbled over them as he shuffled along his rounds. He was seized, bound and gagged before he could

gather his thick wits and call an alarm. Once over the stockade, Pribylof's party wormed their way quickly toward the solitary house of Torpornin the *Uprovalisha*. Guarding it were three sleepy Kamchatkans. The Aleuts showed their worth. Though the three men were crouched together talking, the native hunters crept upon them from behind, captured and gagged them without a sound louder than a dog mouthing a bone.

There was a light in the main room of the house. Pribylof crept to one of the bladder windows and looked through a slit. A heavy wooden bar rested against the door; the window opposite was doubly-bolted. Within two men sat talking and laughing loudly over glasses of thick, green, sarana-fern wine. Pribylof's eyes roved over the room, noting Torpornin's cabinet, his pistol case, the great stone fireplace, and the sword each man wore. He crept back to Matzah.

"There is no entering at door or window. Think you that you can hold me at a rope's end?"

"In my days I have held the bull seal at the end of harpoon line."

"That is well. For now we must climb the roof and you must lower me down the fire-hole. Come."

"What?" whispered Matzah, incredulous. "Down the fire-hole?"

"Come. If we stop for questions, daylight will not find us leagues hence, as it must."

They climbed up a corner, where projecting log ends made a convenient ladder. Thrice, before they gained the low peak of the roof, Pribylof stopped to listen. The hum of maudlin voices within droned on unbroken. Matzah adjusted his rope carefully under Pribylof's arms, making a loose loop that could instantly be thrown off.

"Be at the door with your men when I signal," bade the commander finally. "If no signal comes, do you hasten back to the ship and say nothing of this night's work."

Slowly and softly Pribylof was lowered down the spacious stone flue—so slowly that neither Kiril Kusain nor Porfiri Torpornin heard a sound. They sat at the far end of the room, but scarcely five paces from him; facing each other, laughing over Kusain's tale of some barbarity practiced upon an island tribe. For a full minute Pribylof crouched in the fireplace shadow; his gaze was fixed upon the full, sleek face of Kusain; his hand clutched the hilt of his jeweled

rapier. Then, with a whoop, he leaped into the center of the floor.

In his barbarous disguise Pribylof was an apparition terrifying enough even to men with their full wits about them. His wolf's head lent him a diabolical appearance; the bright red of his body painting looked like broad splashes of blood; the down with which Matzah had cunningly plastered him made him grisly—a mythical thing in human form.

Torpornin, half-drunk from the strong wine, sat stupefied on his stool, unable to move. But Kusain leaped to his feet at the first discovery, snatched a pistol from a case, and leveled it to fire. With his sword Pribylof knocked the weapon to the floor.

"Dog!" fumed Kusain, more in anger than in fear. He spoke in the dialect. "Dog of an Aleut! For this you will hang, after your tongue has been cut out and hot metal poured into your veins. Are your brains aflame with *houthini* that you know not better than to creep armed into the house of the *Uprovalisha*? Ho, guards!"

"Put down that sword," Pribylof cut in, speaking low and throatily in the dialect. "Outside, your guards are bound and gagged and guarded by my men." He turned to Torpornin. "Do you sit quietly on your stool. My quarrel is not with you."

"Porfiri," hissed Kusain in Russian. "Sword out, and aid me. This Aleut dog is crazed, or some dark purpose is in his mind. Let us spit him from either side."

As he spoke, Kusain whipped out his blade and fell upon Pribylof with a sudden fury. Torpornin came to his senses with a jerk. He drew his sword as he rose. But seeing that Kusain was pressing the strange enemy, he sidled toward the block table whereupon lay the case of pistols.

Obviously Kusain considered himself dealing with a mere native. Savagely therefore and with more heat than wisdom, he attacked overhand, thinking to beat down the other's guard and finish him quickly with a single lunge. In the first trade of blows he saw his mistake; saw he was fighting a rare swordsman who could play him along with ease. Amazement, then fear spread over his face. He recoiled, with a cry to Torpornin to be quick. His cry caused Pribylof to look aside and fling himself at the table—barely in time to knock the second pistol from the *Uprovalisha*'s hand. Kusain, half-whirling on his

heel, launched a *falso manco*, a hamstringing cut, that missed its mark but drew a red line across Pribylof's thigh. With sword Torpornin followed up on the right. His back toward the door, Pribylof met their hot, combined assault.

He stood almost erect, swaying and turning from his hips, meeting their strokes overhand, and beating them to the floor. His sword was flashier than an adder's thrust. It stung Torpornin in the side; would have disabled him for good and all had not Kusain shoved over a shrewd thrust that demanded parrying. It touched Kusain, touched him like a barb of lightning, touched him and left its mark over his heart. It seemed to Kusain, who shrank back pale and trembling at his escape, that the blade touched him but lightly on purpose; that it could have run him through had the sword-arm not stayed it.

Torpornin was but an indifferent fighter. As the point of Kusain's blade touched the floor at his recoil, Pribylof faced the *Uprovalisha* squarely and drew out a savage lunge by a skilful feint and apparent ill recovery from a thrust. The blade of Pribylof seemed to wrap itself around that of Torpornin, like a blue snake around another. Came a cry of pain from the latter as the edge of Pribylof's blade laid along his sword-arm and wrested the weapon out of his hand. It fell under Pribylof's foot. He stooped, with an eye on Kusain, and broke it.

"Ha!" cried Kusain. "By the heavens I know that stroke. There is not another man in these waters could have dealt it."

"If you name him you die—now!" said Pribylof in a whisper as he closed again. "And who hears my name dies, too, for this night's work must not be known. Shall you drop that sword, or must I—"

With a curse, despairing of meeting Pribylof blade to blade unaided, Kusain whipped his arm over his shoulder and flung the weapon with all his strength. Crouching for a thrust, Pribylof dropped to the floor. The sword whirled, flashed in the lamplight, and its heavy hilt struck Torpornin full in the face. He fell senseless across the block table.

"Kiril Kusain, murderer!" Pribylof breathed in a low passionless voice. He removed his wolf-head mask. "Nine men await me outside. But I chose to take you in the fair fight you are not worthy of. Better had you fallen on my steel when it

touched your rib, for the sword is a man's death and the noose a dog's."

Kusain's pale face grew paler; his features twitched with fear. He essayed to speak, wetting his lips, but speech failed him. He watched with burning, wide-staring eyes as Gavriilo Pribylof strode to the door, flung down the heavy bar, and signaled to the waiting men outside. They trooped in, a company of grotesques; their painted bodies gleaming in the yellow light; the grim wooden smile of their masks not more grim or set than the purpose on the face of Pribylof.

Kusain's eyes fell upon the rope coiled about Matzah's shoulders. He flung himself at Pribylof's feet.

"Gavriilo!" he supplicated, with a voice that broke in a frenzy of despair. "Gavriilo Pribylof, what do you mean for me? Not that! You jest. You can not, you dare not. Hang me, Kiril Kusain——"

"Murderer!"

"You will die for this!" His voice rose to a threat. "Do you hear me? You will die if you touch me——"

"Bind him!"

Two of the Aleuts seized and bound him.

Pribylof stepped to the cabinet of Torpornin the *Uprovalisha*, and searched hastily through the mass of papers. From an inner drawer he took a letter, addressed to himself in the bold print of Lebedef-Lastochkin. It was not sealed with wax. He steamed it open over the samovar; read his curt dismissal from the company's service and the order to turn his ship over to Kusain. He sealed the letter again, thrust it into the drawer, and motioned to Matzah. Three of the Aleuts picked up their prisoner. Pribylof bent over Torpornin, saw that he was but stunned, and let him slide to an easier position on the floor. Then he followed his men.

The *bidarra* glided shadowlike out of the river mouth and away from the landing and dropped down the harbor more than halfway to the ship, before it stopped on a rocky knoll. Kusain was carried to a ledge that jutted out thirty feet over the water. He was released from the thongs binding him, but two of the natives held him from escaping.

A full red moon had broken through a fog-bank and lighted the ledge with its somber rays. Far and away over the moss hills came the faint sound of a blue fox barking at the moon. Waves lapped quietly at the ledge base. The sea slept; the land was

a-slumber. It was that hour of night—the legend runs—when fiends are abroad for a brief hour; when people die if they are to die within the twenty-four; when the whole earth is silent for one beating stroke.

Kusain stamped his feet and looked about him. Gavriilo Pribylof seemed to be hesitating; Kusain found hope, in this. But his hope was snuffed out as he looked into the face of Pribylof and realized the commander of the *Sv. Georgiy* was hesitant not in purpose but in speech. His low voice broke silence.

"If you have a prayer to make, make it; or a message to give, give it. The blood of Davidof the Kamchatkan and of twenty *promyshleniki* with wife and children awaiting their return, is upon your hands; and it is written that a murderer shall die."

Kusain grinned sickly, either from a brain that reeled or from a hope to turn destiny aside with incredulity.

"You jest!" he stammered hollowly. "You jest, Gessarim Gavriilo Pribylof—jest——"

"Even as you jested when your lying words sent us to that coast where you had laid a death trap by your barbarity, a death trap that closed upon innocent men. You cared not a whit for the blood that would be shed, or the lives that would be lost in order to further your ambition. For that and for the other nameless barbarities that your soul is guilty of, you must die."

The Aleuts completed the work; though with his own hand, that the burden of guilt might rest squarely upon himself, Pribylof placed the noose. A few silent minutes later, as the *bidarra* glided away from the knoll, a form swayed drunkenly against the red cliff-side.



HIS mission of avenging justice accomplished, Pribylof and the Aleuts gained the *Sv. Georgiy* scarcely three hours after they had left it. Upon the natives he could depend for absolute secrecy; for that reason he had employed them. Only one man had recognized them; and that man was now dead. No one knew that the *Sv. Georgiy* was within a thousand versts of Illiuliuk. It was a neat and clean stroke that Pribylof delivered; a fell judgment that swooped like a hawk.

In his cabin he clothed himself again and went on deck to give orders for sailing. He aroused the crew and called for Rucker. The mate was nowhere in evidence. In

alarm Pribylof caused the ship to be searched from deck to keel. Rücker was gone. A missing one-hole *bidarka* told the manner of his going. Gavriilo Pribylof realized too late that Rücker had known the harbor even in the dark; had watched the party go ashore; had shadowed them probably; and surely now was spreading the news of the treasonable dealing with Nightengale and betraying the identity of the man who had hanged Kiril Kusain.

What hope Pribylof had had of climbing into favor again and assuming his rightful place of honor and trust was shattered conclusively now by this last stroke. And his hope *had* lingered, had kept him butting courageously into the adverse currents that had been slowly overwhelming him; for the stakes meant more than life itself. He sat in his cabin, head bowed, weary in soul, reflecting bitterly upon his former fruitful voyages of discovery, of the lands he had added to the Empire, of the magnificent cargoes he had taken home, of the honor accorded him in this fair weather of past years. He debated wearily whether it were better that he should sail boldly into Illiuliuk or take the open sea as a privateer, cut off from homeland, from friends still steadfast, and from all worth while in life.

His gloomy reverie was broken by Matzah standing inside the cabin and speaking.

"Young sir——"

Pribylof motioned for him to be silent. The old Aleut shook his head doggedly and spoke on:

"Young sir, I have sailed with you in the north sea and south sea for eight long years. While there was fur in plenty on the lands we have hunted, I said nothing about the Fog Islands to the north. I have pleaded with you to sail thither, and you have laughed and called me 'old fool.' But my eyes are the eyes of the eagle; I have seen the ill luck overtaking you, as the eagle overtakes the swan. I have seen your friends become your enemies. Now when the hand of every one is against you and nothing else is left for you to do, you may listen to my words and hear my advice.

"Were you even now to find the islands where the fur-seal whelps, where the sea-otter has his Summer home, where the blue fox in thousands can be caught by the hands of a man, you would at one stroke gain more than you have lost. It is your sole chance. If a hunter shoots six arrows against the sil-

ver bear and fails to kill him, shall he fold his arms and groan and not shoot his seventh and last barb? And shall you not go with me in search of the Fog Islands?

"You listened to the words of your enemy, the man whom we killed this night; and you sailed to a coast where suffering and death lay in ambush. Shall you not now listen to the words of him who has served you eight years faithfully; and sail to islands where wealth and honor are waiting?

"Young sir, it is years since I listened to the story of an old man who in young manhood had been blown north in his *kayak* to these islands; but I remember his every word—how he went thither and how he returned. He was a chieftain of Unimak. For a year he lived alone on the Fog Islands; then, since no man can live by himself, he set out for the south and his own people. He was a week without food or water, before the high hills of his native land guided him back home.

"You have heard your hunters say, and you, young sir, have seen that in the open sea the fur-seal passes north in Spring, and south in Autumn with its young. Whither goes he, but to the islands of friendly fog? How many ships have searched for the home of the sea-otter without finding it? And why? Because they have searched too far to the north. They have not heard of the Unimak chieftain, who found them in his *kayak*. Or else they have laughed at his story, even as you have done. The islands lie but two days' sail or three from here. I have known a great hunter on the northern head of this very island to thrust his nose into the north wind and say that he smelled seal. I have——"

"Enough, Matzah," Pribylof broke in. "We shall shoot the last arrow!"



THREE hundred versts, or three days' sail, northwest from Unalaska, the *Sv. Georgiy* ran out of sunshine and fair weather into a little sea-realm of fog and perpetual mist.

It was like nothing Pribylof had ever seen before. The currents, the winds and the season seemed all awry. Dense rain-fog blanketed all but a gray light from the sun. Lightning streaked its zigzag path from heavy cloud to cloud; but it never struck, and its sound was muffled to a dull rumble or was not audible at all. Stiff

winds blew this way and that, never steady for half a day. A straight course was impossible; the *Sv. Georgiy* butted blindly into every point of the compass.

Old Matzah was exultant, hailing the fog and drizzle as proof of the legend. For him the mist-hidden islands already were as good as found. One week of foiled searching, another of battling a Summer hurricane, did not lessen his firm faith that a momentous discovery was at hand; and that a few hours of clear weather would reveal the fabled islands, or continued search *must* find them soon or late.

Pribylof knew not what to think. In the third week he ran north out of the fog-mantled region. Turning, he traversed it in a dozen different directions, radiating out of what seemed to him the region's very center. But never a sight of island or of rock reef did he get. It seemed to him flatly impossible that an island large enough for a single seal herd could lie hidden there in midsea without the *Sv. Georgiy* running bold into it.

Yet signs of land there were; and these signs kept Pribylof's hope flickering, though his judgment told him that hope was futile and his voyage a fool's quest. At times the lead showed a scant ten fathoms of the gray water—a strong token of islands near or at least a reef at hand. But always, when his expectations soared, the lead plunged again to hopeless depths. At times land birds, flying too low to be *en traverse*, appeared suddenly out of the fog, circled the ship and disappeared again. Pods of young female fur-seals sported in the wake of the *Sv. Georgiy*; their rookery had to be close, for seldom do yearling females feed more than seventy versts from the breeding grounds. The Aleutians were three hundred versts away, and the mainland a hundred farther.

Once a slab of ice with fresh earth and bright-colored lichens clinging to it passed under the ship's bow; and more than once the ship ran through courses where the waves had shorter and choppier swells. But Pribylof, who had been "merekhod" for the fur companies and master mariner in the navy, found his sea knowledge all at fault in the strange region of fog.

On a morning of the fourth week, the *Sv. Georgiy* struck—struck solidly against a submerged reef till it was a marvel her stout bows were not crushed by the impact.

Pribylof ran on deck. His first thought was to find if his ship was injured, but a sound came to his ear—a sound that swept thought of all else aside. Above the confusion of his men shouting, above the muffled roar of surf ahead, his experienced ear caught the sweet and unmistakable music of a vast seal rookery. Three lengths ahead of the bows was a rugged, rocky coast rising precipitously from the water. The billowy fog, dense enough to muffle the wonted roar of splitting waves, kept him from seeing more than a faint outline of the coast nearest at hand. He passed his hand over his eyes, and looked again. It was no mirage born of desperate hope; the vision persisted. The devoutly wished-for hour had arrived; the miracle of discovery, after hope had vanished, had come to pass.

Matzah approached. Of the entire company he only was calm, though his air of triumph was all too patent.

"Fish Eagle!" Pribylof greeted him. "Friend in foul weather and fair, too, the last barb struck!"

That afternoon with Matzah and a *bidarra* crew of *promyshleniki*, Pribylof went ashore. For half a mile they had to skirt the water ledge, before a break in the cliff offered a safe landing. With the cataract-like roar of the rookery ahead of them, they walked inland, climbing, it seemed to them, to the back-bone of the island. A rising wind tore rifts in the fog and for a rare hour—the first time in three weeks—they saw the late June sun.

They were, as they surmised, on the back-bone of the island, on the little volcano-mountain which Matzah at once named Ahluckeyak, or "the Eagle's Eerie." From this elevation of almost a thousand feet they looked over the island, already christened the *Sv. Georgiy*, after their valiant ship. The island was ten miles long and almost half as wide, with a coast-line of a day's walk. It was but a tiny volcano-raised dot in the ocean. So well was it hidden that not even the sea-roving Aleutians, save for one storm-driven wanderer, had ever found it. Its cold rock base, meeting the warm Japanese sea current and air, formed the rolling fog, the surcharged clouds, and the drizzling rain that did not fall but *floated* on the air. In the uplands, shallow lagoons and fresh water lakes shimmered in the unwonted sunshine.

Though it was late June, remnants of Winter snow-drifts still lay on sheltered slopes and in deep rock gullies. On high basaltic cliffs fronting the sea, countless sea-birds nested: gulls, murres or "aires," droves of fat little auks, red-legged turnstones, plovers swift-winged and wary guillemots, and gerfalcons that preyed upon them all.

With his glass Pribylof saw several polar bears, evidently stragglers from northern waters brought down and stranded by heavy floe-fields. The uplands were covered with sedge-grass, with phloxes and common violets, with crinkled sphagnum mosses, with lichens of russets, red and lemon-yellows. Tussocks of wild wheat stood like sentinels on the knolls. In moist places the boulders were covered with the green-and-gold carabid beetle.

Four-fifths of the island's coast-line rose sheer from the water, but in three places, each a mile or more wide, the precipitous cliffs broke off. Here were the seal hauling-grounds—not one but three great rookeries. Pribylof and his party approached the nearest, which was smaller than the other two. Farthest back from the shingle landing were the herds of bachelor seals, the "holluschickie." For a thousand yards back from the water-line they covered the gentle slopes. They were ceaselessly on the move; their parade grounds were polished, even the rocky hummocks worn down; and the limits of their grounds were as plainly marked as a morris court.

Nearer the water were restless bands of older bulls which had not been able to get harems on the land-wash or to hold them against the old "sikatches." They hovered near the harems, ceaselessly striving to snatch a cow from the wary old bulls that lorded it over the ten to forty "matkahs" in their seraglios. Lanes led from the water back to the bachelor seal grounds; a file of holluschickie waddled up and down continually, unmolested by the old bulls so long as they looked neither to right or left as they passed the harems. Young females sported in the surf or slept their forty winks curled up in the gentle surges beyond breakwater. Cows in tens of thousands left their harems and plunged into the water, to visit feeding grounds perhaps a hundred miles away, to return within a few hours, and each to pick her fat, black pup from thousands of others.

And the rookery which Pribylof and his

party viewed, which numbered its seals by hundreds of thousands, by acres upon acres tightly packed, was the smallest of the three on the island. Beyond all doubt this was the breeding-ground, the Summer home, of the priceless and disappearing fur-seals; the Fog Islands of Aleut legend; the El Dorado of Russian fur-traders and merchant princes.

On their left hand, the Starry *Artel*, a great seal-plantation, was later to spring up. The rookery that he viewed was to be famed as the Tolstoi Mees, and was to send its cargoes of furs to all the old capitals of the world. And though the wealth of the island, through coming decades, taxed his imagination to conceive, Pribylof did not then know the half of his momentous discovery. He did not know that two hours' sail to the north lay the larger and thrice richer island, St. Paul, which then was fog-mantled and hidden. He did not see Otter and Walrus Islands, almost within cannon-shot of the Eagle's Eerie. Nor, in their wonderment over the seal herds, did they pay attention to other things.

It was old Matzah who pointed out the swarming sea-otter, the hordes of blue and white foxes, and beaches covered with walrus ivory. The sea-otter, never before disturbed in their Summer homes, could be killed with clubs. They covered the rockier ledges where seals could not go; they sported in the surf, or slept upon the kelp; and swarmed inland to the very crest of the island. The foxes, blues and whites, big, sleek fellows with finer furs than the Aleutian kind, preyed upon seals weakened by fighting, searched the cliff-sides for bird-nests, dug for lemming in high, dry ground, and hung about the rookeries for a pup that strayed too far.

Before he went back to the ship that afternoon, a daring plan was shaped in Pribylof's brain; a plan whereby he might win back all that he had lost. Lest his momentous discovery should not be believed, he determined to take proof of it with him, though that would delay him several days. He set the *promyshleniki* and Aleuts to work. They cut out a herd of several thousand holluschickie, drove them inland, despatched them and took their skins on board. Though these seal furs alone were a rich cargo, a tempting bid for favor again, he added five hundred choice blue foxes, more seal-otter than he had taken in five years previously, and four

bidarra loads of the best walrus ivory from Tolstoi Mees.

He could have taken back with him the richest cargo that ever passed the Kuril reefs, but there was need of haste if he were to reach the Kamchatkan port before report got there from Unalaska and set not only Lebedef-Lastochkin but the Imperial authorities against him. If he could reach there first, could tell his story first, could at the right moment flash his discovery and prove it by his store of furs, he might yet recoup. Hence, a week after landing, he left behind him Popov with six *promyshlenniki* and Matzah with the Aleut hunters; and set his sails for Bolsheretsk.



"BY THE heavens!" said Grigor Shelikof, in his lisping voice. "Lebedef-Lastochkin is in hard straits, as he deserves to be who would treat his captains as he has treated you, Gavriilo. Not twenty and four hours ago he prayed me to buy shares of his company; and I, fool! refused. But now——"

They were talking in the cabin of Shelikof's boat, just returned from his memorable expedition to Kadiak. Pribylof had unfolded the story of the discovery to the shrewd and kindly merchant colonizer.

Shelikof's eyes gleamed at the tale.

"By the heavens! A fool!" he repeated.

"Lebedef was here at Bolsheretsk?" demanded Pribylof.

"He has just departed in a swift ketch for Petropavlovsk."

"Then you shall follow him with all speed, and buy the last share he will sell. This is my chance to requite him for the scant favor he showed me. But why did he leave Petropavlovsk in this haste?"

"He was summoned by a message. There is some strange stir there. Veranoff, Jolstyk and Lisiansky the Pole were given orders, when they touched here a week back, to proceed at once to Petropavlovsk. And even Profiri Torpornin, the *Uprovalischa* at Illiuliuk, was summoned from Unalaska, for he was on Veranoff's *Sv. Pavel*——"

Pribylof started to his feet like a man struck a sudden blow.

"Torpornin—and the others—summoned? Is this hearsay, Grigor Shelikof?"

"I saw them, I myself."

"Do you know, did you hear, did you discover anything of the nature of their summons?"

"Scarcely a word, for I was sick with a fever then. I heard mentioned the name of Kiril Kusain. But you are ill, Gavriilo! What troubles you?"

"Nothing, nothing. It sounds like my judgment—the last blow," Pribylof said slowly.

When he could command himself to speak calmly, he detailed the story of Kusain's treachery, the loss of Davidof and his men, and the summary justice meted out. Shelikof listened, his brows knit in deepest concern.

"It is indeed sore straits for you," he said, when Pribylof had finished. "I would have done as you did, whatever penalty your fearlessness draws. But even now there may be escape for you. If you sail away, you are lost. If you go boldly to Petropavlovsk, you have a slender chance. I shall be there to aid you, and my word has some power, especially since I have intimate knowledge of Kusain's barbarities. When Lebedef learns of the wealth you have brought him, he will be as strongly for you as he was against you. It were better that you delay your following three days, and give me time to stir up agencies in your behalf, for your case—I will not lie—is perilous."

"I shall fight my own battles," said Pribylof, but not unthankfully. "I can sail to Canton, and with the peltry I now have I can buy stores for five years and refit the *Sv. Georgiy*. Next Winter on the island I can take half a million rubles of fur——"

"And after that, what? The open sea and no home port while you draw breath. Take an old man's advice. Follow me to Petropavlovsk. Some one waits there for you—has waited these five years."

Pribylof spoke, five minutes later.

"Do you therefore leave to night. I am hasty to find out the worst that can happen."



THE *Sv. Georgiy* was anchored inside the Petropavlovsk reef at high noon three days later. Her coming brought a group of sailors and officers to the landing. Excitement was high-pitched in the straggling *Ostrog*. Bells clanged; ships in the harbor left off their pieces; the crowd on shore loosed a salvo of musketry.

"A warm welcome, by heavens!" Pribylof muttered to himself. "And strange, considering the hero is probably under sentence already!"

He went ashore in a *bidarra* with ten of the scant crew. Almost the first to greet him as he stepped upon the landing was Porfiri Torpornin wearing a fresh scar across his forehead. The *Uprovalischa* grasped him by the hand. Pribylof, mystified by the greeting, was doubly mystified when Veranoff of the *Sv. Pavel*, Jolstyk, and Lisiansky the Pole crowded close to shake his hand. A crowd of sailors swarmed around his crew, hoisted them upon their shoulders, and bore them away shouting.

The surge about Pribylof gave way before a pompous figure clothed in ermine and velvet and weighed down with gold and jewels to sink a sloop. None other than Lebedef-Lastochkin it was who embraced the captain of the *Sv. Georgiy* and wheezed a blessing in the name of all the saints.

"Shelikof," cried Pribylof, to a man who stood apart laughing silently. "For — sake, what is the matter?"

"Twenty of them I have sold to that man!" rasped Lebedef-Lastochkin, following Pribylof's gaze and noting Shelikof at the same time.

"Twenty shares but yesterday. The dog! It is an outrage, that price he paid. He had heard. He came in a swift sloop from Bolsheretsk. No sooner had I put pen to paper and he had counted out the price, than he told me of your cargo and of the Fog Islands. A fiend take him! But I have shares enough left."

Pribylof pushed himself through the crowd to Shelikof's side and shook him roughly by the arm.

"Am I crazy?" he demanded. "I see you have spread the news of the discovery and cargo. But what of the other matter? Speak, man; it is no matter to laugh about."

Shelikof's eyes twinkled.

"Nor is this a place to talk about it. Come. We will escape this crowd. Lebedef will be falling about your neck, and the other of your fair weather friends will be wringing off your hand. What a veering of the wind!"

With difficulty Pribylof escaped the crowd. From the officers to the nakedest native, they followed him to Shelikof's shouse and clamored outside for a sight of him.

"The letter," said Shelikof, "which Lebedef sent to Illiuliuk to dismiss you, Torpornin brought back with him to Bolsheretsk. In my presence last night Lebedef solemnly burned it, and blessed himself that you had not read it."

"But Kusain? What of the matter with him?"

"Eugénie tells me that she wrote you once concerning his brutalities, and concerning the efforts made to mute his deeds. But word got out. An Imperial emissary was sent to investigate; was sent, dear Pribylof, from St. Petersburg itself. It was he who summoned Torpornin and the others to testify. Already he had gathered damning evidence against Kusain, when Torpornin arrived with his story of how you had avenged your men. Thus you were but the instrument of Imperial justice, and so—thank Lebedef equally with me—you are named in the emissary's report. It would have gone differently with you had word of your deed arrived before the evidence against Kusain was complete. But, as it happened, Kusain's ship, the *Sv. Pavel i Sv. Petr*, which left Illiuliuk to bring word of what you had done, never reached Kamchatka.

"The ship and its new captain, your mate Rücker, was taken by a Swedish Privateer. The crew were sent back to Torpornin with the compliments of one Nightengale, the captain. A strange and twisted case it is, indeed! If my short account is not enough, you may refer for details to another."

Pribylof looked behind him—at Eugénie Falelie standing in the open door. She came forward to greet him.

At all times Gavriilo Pribylof was a man of action. When he recovered himself sufficiently to care about the presence of a third person, Shelikof had discreetly vanished!





Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of heaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

NOW what are we going to do in cases of this kind? A comrade sends us an interesting letter and then adds a post-script: "You may use my name if you wish, but I would rather you would sign my initials." Out of common courtesy I'd like to meet his wishes, but on the other hand rises up the fact that we have begun the policy of discriminating against letters whose writers ask not to have their names printed. Our Camp-Fire is for free and open discussion among men willing to stand up alongside what they say. There is sometimes justifiable reason for omitting the name, but generally no reason except the desire not to seek or seem to seek publicity.

Publicity? At Camp-Fire it isn't a question of publicity. Just a question of

being willing, each of us, to do his share toward making our meetings interesting instead of just listening to the other comrades. You're entirely free to do nothing but listen if so inclined, but isn't it a bit more sportsmanlike and comradely to carry your share of the entertaining? And if you do carry it, why should any one think you are seeking publicity?

I'VE TOLD you I thought some of those who asked not to have their names printed with their letters did so because they felt their dignity would suffer from the use of their name in a "cheap popular fiction magazine." Doubtless this is true. Our cheap paper and the general classification to which we belong have been a serious obstacle in getting many people to look at

the magazine and judge it by its actual contents. Many still refuse even to examine it—would consider it no recommendation for you if your name appeared in it. Ever since my statements of the case spontaneous letters have poured in showing at least that those who *have* tried out the magazine for themselves are by no means ashamed of liking it, however “highbrow” they may be. So that I can not attribute to fear for dignity many of the cases asking that name be not printed.

Take this very comrade who asks that only initials be used. In the first part of his letter, which is not given below, he expressed his surprise that any one should consider *Adventure* in a class with the trashy publications, mentioned eight years of university work mostly in the arts and sciences, a love for the old classics, especially Greek, and the medieval and modern, and a rather wide reading in them and stated that *Adventure* is the only magazine he takes constantly. There is hardly reason to think he would be “ashamed” to have his name appear in it—if he didn’t mean what he said he’d not have bothered to write at all.

NO, IT’S probably just that he doesn’t seek publicity or wish to seem to seek it. Let’s forget the publicity bugaboo. We come together for entertainment and to broaden our experience and understanding through contact with one another. It’s up to each of us to give as well as to take. We’re among friends and can be sure that, when we give, the rest will know we’re merely doing our part, not hunting for publicity.

In this particular case I’m being weak and polite. Only initials are printed. But in general, comrade John Smith, when you do your bit please don’t ask me to sign your letter “J. S.”

Here’s the letter, and I hope nothing I’ve said suggests that both it and W. E. B. are not very welcome at our blaze:

Miami, Florida.

While I was doing some research in ancient history, I came across something that startled me. To put it in chronological form here it is:

I READ in a newspaper one day a story of a round-up in Colorado containing a sentence something like this: “Again the knight of the plains came into his own when the daring riders started to bull-dog a steer. Truly American, that

sport—invented here by the only men who could conceive of such a daring feat.”

Well, to make a long story short, I happened to remember this thing I had run down in the musty old library. Away back at the time the Greeks invaded the peninsula, long before there was any Greek civilization, there was a civilization known as the Aegean. These Aegeans were probably a mixture of the most dominant races of their section. They had a sport called “Bull-leaping” or “Bull-throwing.” I believed it was used somewhat as the Romans later used the lions on the Christians. There was the pomp and splendor of the modern bull-fight in the ceremony. The picadors and all the others went through the preliminaries to arouse the bull to the desired pitch of anger. Then the bull thrower entered the ring. The bull dashes madly at him, lowering his head. The bull-thrower caught the bull by the horns and turned a somersault on to the bull’s back and leaped lightly to the ground. Later, apparently, they added the attraction of throwing the bull at the second or third somersault.

This apparently was modified into the bull-fight of today.

I know that every time some one discovers something new some one else discovers that the Chinese knew it thousands of years ago and I simply couldn’t help being a kill-joy.

There’s a world of good literature in those days for some of your penmen and I hope to see some stories out of there. Very sincerely yours.—W. E. B.

A LETTER from William McAdoo, Chief City Magistrate, New York City, and a reply from Donald E. Martin, Sheriff of Lemhi County, Idaho. Instead of making any comments, I simply present the letters and leave you to your own conclusions. They bear upon the proposed anti-weapon legislation and its further restrictions upon personal liberty and Constitutional rights.

Adventure’s stand on this question in general has been clearly stated.

The American people have already suffered enough from a mania for passing inevitably ineffective laws instead of combating an evil by common-sense methods.¹ It has been *proved by experience* that anti-weapon laws do not prevent criminals from having all the weapons they wish.

If pistols and revolvers *could* be legislated out of the reach of criminals, the criminals would simply turn to knives, clubs, stones and a hundred other weapons. You can not legislate all stones, sticks, knives, etc., out of a country.

DISARMING and leaving defenseless the law-abiding citizens when unable to disarm the criminals is either folly or cold-blooded conspiracy for criminal or treasonable ends. The public has never been able to find out the source of all the

money that backs the anti-weapon campaign. If these foolish anti-weapon proposals become law (and there is very real danger that they may, perhaps even before this reaches you) either that law will be ineffective and breed further disrespect for law, or—for the sake of argument—it will be effective. If it is effective, no one will profit more from a disarmed citizenry than will the Bolsheviks and others who plot to overthrow our government by force or to control it from within for the benefit of a few and at the expense of the many.

MOST important of all, beyond any shadow of doubt both the spirit and intention and the letter of the Constitution of the United States are that the citizens of this democracy shall, for their own protection against foes within and without, be trained in the use of arms and that their right to have and to bear arms shall not be infringed. Despite anything the lawyers may do to twist and set aside this clear dictum of the Constitution, its real meaning is clear beyond doubt to any sane man. These anti-weapon proposals ask for a plain violation of the American citizen's constitutional right to bear arms. With our constitutional rights of free speech and free assemblage being constantly attacked and taken from us, this campaign for further infringement of such rights becomes doubly serious.

City of New York,
City Magistrates' Courts.

March 10, 1924.

Sheriff Donald E. Martin,
Salmon, Lemhi Co., Idaho.

DEAR SIR: I am the author of the bill introduced by Senator Copeland, and so he sent your letter to me. The Bill taxing revolvers and pistols, now as common as lead-pencils in this country, was endorsed by two police conventions held in this city, representing twenty-seven nations, including all of the United States and Canada, and endorsed by the American Bar Association, and possibly the sheriffs would have joined in if they had been asked.

I TAKE it from your letter, that in your part of Idaho, at least, it would not be safe for any man to go out there without an automatic. You must have a fine crop of murders and shootings or else why are you so heated up about not having revolvers and pistols in the possession of people. You are wasting your time writing political threats to Senator Copeland. The overwhelming majority of the people, realizing that there are more people shot and murdered in the United States with revolvers and pistols in one year than in all the rest of the world besides, are favorable to the Bill, and certainly not disposed to criticize the senator.

Do not waste your time writing any more letters. The pistol manufacturers and dealers and their agents have the best lobby I have ever encountered in a long public service. You can leave the bad case to them.

Very sincerely yours,—WILLIAM MCADOO,
Chief City Magistrate.

Office of Donald E. Martin,
Sheriff of Lemhi County, Idaho.
Salmon, Idaho.

March 17, 1924.

Mr. William McAdoo,
Chief City Magistrate,
New York City, N. Y.

SIR: Your letter of the 10th inst., *in re* the Copeland Pistol Taxing Bill on hand and contents noted. I think I shall permit myself to disobey your injunction to cease writing long enough to briefly reply to your polite and moderate communication.

IN THE first place I have every respect for Senator Copeland, who is, in my opinion, a much better and cleaner man than his State usually sends to Washington. I certainly did not intend my note to him to convey anything to the contrary nor do I think it did. However, my respect for Senator Copeland is not going to keep me from differing with him when I think he is wrong. As long as I am alive I am going to do my own thinking. I shall try to make my thinking right, but, right or wrong, I shall think for myself. When I find a certain thing wrong I am going to fight against it and when I find it right I shall fight for it. I am not a political sheep to be herded by a political sheep-herder from any place, including Tammany Hall.

DO YOU remember that I offered to debate the question with Senator Copeland or to offer evidence in favor of my side of the case? You answered with a letter that was decidedly contemptuous and offensive. Perhaps that is your understanding of common courtesy and perhaps that is the answer of one who has the wrong side of an argument. It is a matter of indifference to me who advocates your gun bill. I say it is tyrannical, un-American and dangerous and I offer to prove it. Judging from your letter you would like to put me in jail for disagreeing with you. Abuse and coercion and persecution have always been the weapons of stubborn error.

WHEN Idaho's murder record per capita gets to within a reasonable fraction of New York's and when our people have millions of dollars a year stolen from them by bandits and hi-jackers and thugs, while a helpless police force stands around and sucks its thumb, then, sir, it will be time for you to get sarcastic about its not being safe to come to any part of this State or any other Western State without an automatic or about our having a fine crop of murders and shootings. I will promise you more safety in Idaho than you can honestly promise me in New York and if you should happen to carry a gun, so long as you keep your place, I can also promise you that you will be safe from idiotic legislation such as the Sullivan law which makes it a crime for an honest man to defend his life and property against thugs with a gun. Cases are not unknown when convicted thugs were

taken from jail to testify against the man who captured them because he, too, had a gun.

Assistant Attorney General Mabel Walker Willebrandt compiled a map showing from records and information in the office of the Attorney General and the Department of Justice to what extent the prohibition law was being enforced in the various parts of the United States. That map was lately reproduced in the *Literary Digest*. Idaho, Utah and Kansas were credited with 95 per cent. enforcement and New York City was credited with 10 per cent. enforcement. Any other law would have looked about the same on such a map. I think that answers your slur about Idaho.

THE West has made away with its gunmen outside of the cities by the childishly simple expedient of encouraging the law-abiding citizens to arm and resist these predatory outlaws. Did you ever hear what happened to the James-Younger gang at Northfield, Minn.? The same thing happened in many other Western villages. Witness the Dalton affair at Coffeyville, Kansas. You could do the same, but you pass laws to further disarm the law-abiding man and you witness robbery after robbery and murder after murder.

If you had a record of law enforcement you wouldn't think of gun laws. You are only trying to make up for your inefficiency and laxity with a new intolerant pest law. As it is, you were never known to send any one to the chair except by accident and, owing to graft and inefficiency in your police department and dry-rot, dumbness, red-tape, politics and graft in your courts, murder is a comparatively safe pastime in New York. It is a common phenomenon for some moron to hop up with a cure-all for crime, but, alas, crime continues and criminals increase in spite of moron cure-alls.

I SUPPOSE, if you get your law passed, after it has proven to be a Bolshevik-making fizzle, as it certainly will, you will want to tax axes, knives and bricks out of existence. Since your criminals usually escape in swift cars, why not try taxing automobiles out of existence? That would be precisely as sensible as what you are trying to do.

Allow me to thank you for your kind words about the pistol manufacturers' and dealers' lobby. That is the most cheerful news I have had for many a day. Contrary to your advice and instruction, I shall strengthen their hand with every possible means at my disposal.

You have no overwhelming majority of people in favor of your tyrannical law. You may think you have an overwhelming minority and can black-jack your bill through Washington by threats and suppression of evidence. The American Rifle Association alone has more members, and every one against your bill, than you can muster in its favor.

NOW I am offering you a chance to gain some cheap glory. I will challenge you to a written debate on this gun question, in any periodical or paper you care to write in or any periodical or paper that will publish the same. I can get authority, I believe, to speak for my side. Surely you can represent your side. Or I will offer the same challenge to any one you care to appoint to represent you. Surely you can inveigle some one into attempting to defend your indefensible position. The American Bar Association, which endorses your law, is large.

It will be easy; I am sure, for some intellectual New Yorker to utterly demolish the ignorant old savage from the abysmal depths of stygian darkness, that, as is well known in your metropolis, exist all over the United States outside of New York City.

Incidentally I think I can get your letter to me some publicity where it will do the most good, and if you decide to ignore this challenge or make an excuse, which is precisely what you will do, having too weak a case to venture into the open with it, I think I can promise you some wholesome publicity on that phase of our correspondence as well.

Very truly yours,—DONALD E. MARTIN,
Sheriff of Lemhi County, Idaho.

OTHER letters have been added to the correspondence:

City of New York,
City Magistrates' Courts.
March 24, 1924.

Donald E. Martin, Esq.,
Sheriff of Lemhi County,
Salmon, Idaho.

DEAR SIR: You know well enough that the bill does not prevent you from carrying a pistol in the open. You know well enough you can go around with all the guns that would fill an armory and the proposed law would not in any wise prevent you. Why are you so heated up, and why do you want more pistols? Isn't the country now flooded with pistols and revolvers? Aren't we shooting up and killing more people than all the rest of the world besides? Isn't the revolver the greatest menace to us as a nation, and don't you feel ashamed at the comparison with other countries? There is nothing to debate. If you were a paid agent of the manufacturers and dealers I would understand why you write to Senator Copeland as you do.

Very sincerely yours,—WILLIAM McADOO,
Chief City Magistrate.

Salmon, Idaho.
April 1, 1924.

Mr. William McAdoo,
Chief City Magistrate,
New York City, N. Y.

DEAR SIR: In reply to your note of the 24th inst. I will say that I certainly think there is something to debate about. I will challenge you again on the following definite proposition:

"Resolved: That all laws intended to or tending to hamper, restrict or prohibit the free purchase, use and possession of pistols, revolvers and other firearms, by American citizens (aliens and persons convicted of crime specifically excluded), are dangerous, a menace to the United States and more likely to increase than to decrease crime."

That platform is certainly definite enough. It is also easily established that the law you sponsor will hamper, restrict and prohibit (financially at least) the free purchase, use and possession of pistols and revolvers by American citizens.

You can not seem to realize that there are thousands of men and women in the United States who hate tyranny and pest laws as whole-heartedly as ever did their ancestors in the days of King George III, or that there are thousands of men and women in the United States who are not the agents of any one and who can not be bluffed by power and position or bought by any interest however great.

I must confess that it looks queer to me that you, with so much better chance to get up your side of the argument, with public libraries and every facility one could ask for at your disposal, should shy around a Western sheriff, handicapped at the start by living in a little village with none of these facilities. There is just one reason for that timidity and it is because your side dare not come out in the open.

You ask me if I am not ashamed of our national murder record. Certainly I am. Any good citizen is. I am also ashamed of our forgery record and of the Veterans' Bureau and of Teapot Dome and of the flagrant violation of the prohibition law and of the even more disgraceful and open corruption of public officials and of the way the Federal drug laws are evaded and broken. But I must say that I fail to see where pistols and revolvers are to blame.

Please do not think that I have any personal animosity toward you. I am perfectly willing to admit that you are what I claim myself to be, an honest, conscientious public servant. The error that you have fallen into is very common in the eastern part of the United States and is, I believe, quite generally shared by a large number of people who have never taken the trouble to thoroughly investigate the matter or who are incapable of understanding that there is inevitably a second side to every question.

Very truly yours,—DONALD E. MARTIN,
Sheriff of Lemhi County, Idaho.

HERE is a letter from Sheriff Martin to me. The June issue of *Outdoor Life* will have been long in print by the time this reaches you. If either Magistrate McAdoo or Senator Copeland accepts the opportunity to lay before the public facts and arguments justifying the bill they advocate, some following issue of *Outdoor Life* will doubtless present the debate. If not, not.

Salmon, Idaho.

May 13, 1924.

DEAR MR. HOFFMAN: The *Outdoor Life* magazine, a popular and widely read gun, dog and rod periodical, will publish in its June issue an offer to Mr. McAdoo and Senator Copeland, of enough space for the debate I challenged them to on the question of taxing guns out of existence. If possible, a note of that offer should be made in *Adventure* when you publish the correspondence between Mr. McAdoo and myself, as it leaves the opposition without an excuse for failing to present their case to the public.
—DONALD E. MARTIN.

As stated above, I have no comment to make other than that I am content to leave in the hands of Sheriff Martin the case against the anti-weapon movement. What Congress may have done in the meantime I can't of course predict. Congress, however, while it is paid by the people for a year's work, uses only part of that year for the people's business even when in session.

THE first part of this comrade's letter rapped me because I opposed (and still oppose) the Soldier's Bonus and because I made an already admitted slip in stating the total amount it would cost the country. Lots of letters rapped me or at least took issue—more than we had space for. But I'm still against the bonus. All you please for the maimed and for needy relatives of the killed, but nothing for the men who merely served their country in accordance with its law and custom.

I admit the rank injustice that made them bear the brunt while others stayed at home and grew fat. The right remedy, however, if any remedy can now be applied, is not the paying of money to the veterans, but a draft for taxes or service from the rest of us, even a retroactive draft. What happened was only what was bound to happen under the laws and customs then—and still—in force. They were and are bad laws and customs. The veterans paid the bitter bill because they, like the rest of us, were bad citizens, too indifferent even to think about bad laws and customs until personally hurt by them. Even now, after having been hurt by them, most of the veterans (and most of the rest of us) are such bad citizens that all they can think about is getting a few dollars out of their country instead of working to prevent the same injustice from ever falling again upon them or upon any other Americans.

IF IT'S such an important thing (and God knows it *is* important!), why don't you veterans do something more to the point than just yell for a few dollars each for yourselves? If it's so small a matter that a few hundred dollars per can salve the hurt, why deafen the country with such a loud yell? Lots of people have lost a few hundred dollars without making a national issue of it. If you see in it something more important than the few dollars per, why in heaven's name don't you turn your efforts to that something more instead of to getting the dollars? Why not put up a fight to prevent this injustice from ever happening again in this country?

No, I'm not putting the job up to you alone. But if you who suffered from it won't try to prevent the recurrence of that injustice, what can be expected from the rest of us who did not suffer from it or who even gained by it?

AND don't waste any time thinking I'm against the veterans instead of for them. I merely believe in rectifying a law before it becomes effective instead of complaining afterward.

There's only one way to rectify it—universal draft of labor and capital in case of war.

Universal draft of labor and capital is also the most practical step that can be taken to end the idiotic monstrosity of war.

Universal draft of labor and capital is also the most practical step that can be taken to put the country into a thoroughly efficient condition of preparedness.

Show me some other plan that will so strongly tend both to end war and to be prepared against one.

THERE is a still better remedy that would accomplish still more, but most Americans would say it is not "practical." (I'd be less sick of that "not practical" argument if some one could show me how this country has really profited such a lot by being "practical.") The better remedy I have in mind is a real application of the Golden Rule to the affairs of real life. In other words, a real practise of real Christianity instead of—well, instead of what we are pleased to call the practise of what we are pleased to call Christianity.

Real application of real Christianity to real affairs would certainly be called "not practical" by the average American. I'll admit this much: the present application of the present Christianity is, on the whole, very "practical." That's what's the matter with it.

Yes, it's "practical." It doesn't let itself interfere too inconveniently with our business methods or our greed for money or our lust for power or our internal or our international relations, but fits nicely into our whole beautiful "practical" scheme of things. We are a "practical" people and proud of it. Apply the Golden Rule to actual affairs? Absurd!

YET there's this to be said. The world's been "practical," very, very "practical," for a matter of some centuries and is getting much more so all the time. Economic determinism, money, realism, materialism and all that sort of thing. Net result? Well, all of us most "civilized" nations have just got through murdering

one another by the million and are only waiting to catch our breath before we go at it again. Within each nation class hatred is boiling up perilously close to the lid of the kettle. Within most individuals the almighty dollar stands as the goal of ambition and the measure of worth.

The "practical" theory, alias materialism, has, God knows, had its thorough trying out. The test of the pudding is the eating thereof. Well, we've eaten thereof and found the taste bitter to the teeth. Why not exercise a little horse sense and take a real taste of some of these other things that are not quite so fatally "practical?" The Golden Rule, for example. Could it possibly taste any worse than what is in our mouths at present?

TO GO back to the letter. Only the first part of it dealt with the bonus—argued the question fairly and decently and is in no way responsible for my outbreak above. The remainder of it bears on a story we published in the Fall or late Summer of 1923:

Seattle, Washington.

What started me on the trail was W. Townend's story "The Tramp." *Jimmy Kerrill's* fight to rig a jury rudder on the old *Medea* reminded me of a little time that I once really had with a jury rig many years ago. And from what I learned that time I think that *Jimmy's* third rudder would have worked, though he was hampered with short "booms," derricks Mr. Townend calls them; when he speaks of her 36-ft. derricks he should see a West Coast lumber ship with 60 and even 70 ft. booms.

DURING the "Gold Rush" to Nome in 1900-01 I was quartermaster on the old *Oregon*. She was an old Western Ocean liner built in the early 70's by John Roach at Chester, Penn., and in common with most of the craft that were on the Alaska run at that time was not all what she should be. Owners were not putting any more money into ships than they had to, the coast was uncharted and there were no lights, freight rates were up in that air and for passenger rates they were what a man could buy them for.

We left on June first for Nome and made two round trips. Started the third in September and landed our passengers and started back for Seattle. As she was one of the last ships to leave Nome she was crowded with returning miners, prospectors and dance-hall girls—some crowd.

WHEN the old girl poked her nose outside of Unimak Pass we found a peach of a Southwester blowing and kicking up a very heavy sea. About three o'clock that afternoon I was at the wheel and the wind, striking the ship on the quarter, would swing her head off and, being light, she was hard to hold up. Soon she started to swing and with the helm hard over she would not answer.

The Third Mate called my partner to go aft and look to see if the tiller chains had parted. Soon he came back and reported they were all right but that there was a bad bumping under her stern. The Old Man had been called by then and he and the Mate, Jack Ancill, started aft to see what was the trouble.

We found out soon enough, the rudder had carried away from the stern frame and was hanging from the rudder stock only. Every time the ship would roll, and she was in the trough of the sea then, the rudder would bang against the counter hard enough to shake the ship. It did not take Capt. Seeley (who by the way is a brother to the Supervising Inspector for the Port of New York) long to see that the rudder had to be cut adrift or it would stave a hole in the ship. The engine-room gang started to unbolt the stock, just inside the ship. The stock was in two pieces and joined together by a flange. They soon had the rudder adrift and the hole in the ship plugged up with mattresses and shored down from the deck.

THE making of the jury rudder follows Mr.

Townend's story very closely. First we unshipped the two forward cargo booms and placed them on deck; the engine-room gang cut a plate out of the engine-room bulkhead, about 6 x 12 ft.; this was placed between the two booms; through bolts held it in place and then it was backed with three-inch planks. The whole length of the booms were then lashed with three-inch line.

While this work was going on the after gang had unshipped the two after booms—she only had two hatches—and had lashed them in place one on each side of the quarter at right angles to the ship. Each boom projected about 20 to 25 feet outboard; heavy preventers were rove to a point well forward to the ends of the booms.

The forward booms were launched overboard and lead aft. A length of heavy chain was made fast to the forward end of the booms, the plate was placed about ten feet from the end of the boom and fished up the hole that had been occupied by the rudder stock, and well made fast to the after bitts. Before launching overboard, a heavy iron block, in fact a topping lift block, had been made fast to the outer end of the jury rudder and a long wire rove through it. This in turn was made fast to the boom projecting outboard for a standing part and the other end lead through another block to the heel of the boom and then to the after winch. Needless to say that the other side of the ship was rigged the same.

THE engines were started and we soon got under way. It soon developed that the strain on the ship was too great with the jury rudder triced up through the rudder hole, so a length of heavy towing wire was bent on to the inboard side of the rudder and slacked away this let the rudder float about 400 ft. astern. Steering was done by the after winch, simply by hauling in on one side and slacking away on the other. We steered the ship in the Straits and right up to anchorage in Port Townsend Bay at an average speed of about ten knots for about 1700 miles.

THIS is the second time that I have been able to check up on *Adventure* stories. Remember the bull and tiger fight circular I sent you? And I am

sure that if Mr. Townend wanted to, *Jimmy Kerrill* could have taken the old *Medea* right up to anchorage with his jury rig, for it sounded all right to me.—FRANCIS ROTCH.

FROM H. C. Wire a few words concerning the actual facts back of his story in this issue:

Laguna Beach, California.

MR. HOFFMAN: I think an interesting book could be written on where stories are found. For example, I discovered this one of Michael Foster at the bottom of a thirty-foot well shaft.

A few weeks ago I was helping an old-timer in the country hereabouts dig a well on his place, and down that hole, between spells with a pick and shovel, he told me the facts concerning this fighting ranchman.

SINCE that time I have learned more about Foster whenever I could; mostly from men who, in their boyhood days, knew either the old gentleman or his record. Then, too, his adobe ranchhouse near the Mission San Juan Capistrano is only nine miles from where I am now living.

So there is true history in the tale, and I have followed it as closely as possible. Of course, as it has been passed along from man to man it may have changed in detail, each narrator interpreting what happened to suit his own belief.

But the main fact stands. Michael Foster, a ranchman near the California border, the first deputy United States Marshal in those parts, did declare war on Baja California, and he followed up that declaration with an army—of ten cowhands.

I regret that the story proved to be so short, but the pure action seemed too darned good to be spoiled by padding it with make-believe.—WIRE.

THIS comrade's letter bears the head "A. Foehl, Jr. & Company, Importers and Exporters of Reptiles, Batrachians, Small Mammals." He surely ought to be worth hearing on vinegerones and esculpions. I trust he's in touch with B. C. D. by this time and has got an escorpion. If not, he can have mine if I ever get one.

Philadelphia.

First I want to answer B. C. D. in the April 30th issue. Vinegerones are scorpions according to his description. "Esculpion" is probably escorpion, no relation to the scorpions (insects) but a very poisonous lizard scientifically called *Heloderma horridum*, first cousin to the far-famed Gila Monster (*H. suspectum*). The Escorpion looks a great deal like the Gila Monster only it is three times at large, has a black head, and a long lizard-like tail. A doctor in the University of Pennsylvania carries a paralyzed arm as the result of a bite from this lizard. It is also called *Sonora Heloderm*, Mexican Beaded Lizard, etc.

Be glad to answer questions like B. C. D., if sent to me; I don't have time to read through every *Adventure* as I am "adventuring" by mail to all parts of the globe trying to get new Zoological curiosities, and it takes time.

Could I have B. C. D.'s address and full name? I'd like to write to him and try to get an Escorpion.

Self addressed envelope enclosed for same. Thanks.
—A. FOEHL, JR.

A READER has taken offense because in introducing a letter of his in "Camp-Fire" I spoke of him as "one of you," his name following at the end of his letter. To him it suggests condescension. I have been using that phrase for years, naturally without thought of offense, and none of you has ever raised a shadow of objection. When introducing a letter sometimes I use the man's name, sometimes that phrase, but certainly with no conscious distinction in my mind and chiefly to avoid monotony. To me the phrase seemed merely a friendly and familiar one; my feeling toward Camp-Fire comrades is such that to speak of "one of you" most emphatically carries with it no trace of slight. Sometimes when referring to a contribution in a former "Camp-Fire" I've used the phrase for the simple reason that I couldn't remember off-hand the name of the particular comrade who had written that particular letter—I've confessed many times at Camp-Fire that my memory is worse than bad.

All in all I find myself utterly unable to find any offense or slight in those words, but if any other "one of you" has found them in any way objectionable, please tell me. Though I don't know how I'd get on without 'em after all these years of comfortable and informal usage!

THE reader in question, so far as I understand his case, feels that his dignity suffers from so general and common a designation as "one of you." I can readily see how it might in some circumstances, but not at our informal, friendly, go-as-you please Camp-Fire. Perhaps my own views on personal dignity are too radical or something, but I've never been able to get up much enthusiasm in my own case over formalities and details. Always seemed that if the only kind of personal dignity I could muster was dependent on such things it wasn't a kind worth having.

Just like social standing and claims to good breeding. So far as I can see, the people who really have good breeding don't feel the need of proving it on all occasions by insistence upon forms and formalities.

As you see, I'm just sort of wandering on. These speculations on personal dignity,

breeding and so forth have no application to the reader who objected to that phrase. I quite seriously want to know if the phrase gives offense to others. If it's offensive in only this one case it's due to some personal kink such as all of us have, but if offensive to others as well I'll try to avoid it.

BUT since I've started speculating around, can some one tell me this? Many years ago I heard or read a definition of a gentleman as "one who is ready to forego his advantage," or words to that effect. Can some one give me the exact words and the name of the man or woman who formulated the definition? It doesn't seem to cover the whole ground but always impressed me as particularly worth thinking over. Thinking it over in my own case is often not a comfortable process, but the uncomfortable things are frequently good for a fellow.

Going back to our phrase, if "one of you" carries a slight, would "one of us" be an improvement? Or is the only safe course to call the comrade by his name even though it follows with his letter? Or am I making altogether too much of the matter? If so, we'll forget it; if not, tell me. The one really important point is that nothing preventable should mar the friendly feeling at our Camp-Fire.

DON'T forget that most of our original cover paintings are for sale to the highest bidders. All bidding is done by mail. Each canvas is sent express collect to the highest bidder one month after the magazine bearing it has appeared on the news-stands.—A. S. H.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS



Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.



VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES TO ANY READER

These services of *Adventure*, mostly free, are open to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we ask in return only that you read and observe the simple rules, thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application. We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you post-paid, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, not to any individual.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 24 T Wharf, Boston, Mass., can supply Adventure back through 1918, and occasional copies before that.

WILL SELL: Sept. to Dec. 1921; all 1922 except June, July 10th and 20th and Dec. 10th; all 1923 except June 30th, Nov. and Dec. 10. Seventy issues all in first-class condition. Ten dollars for the lot, charges prepaid.—Address L. F. WILSON, 338 Wilson St., Chillicothe, Mo.

WILL SELL: Twenty-seven issues 1921 and thirty-six issues 1922. All covers intact. Ten cents per issue plus shipping charges.—Address ALFRED C. BOWMAN, 91 Englewood Avenue, Detroit, Mich.

WILL SELL: Ten issues 1916, all 1917, 1918, 1919 and 1920 complete. Ten cents per issue postpaid.—Address W. S. CHAPMAN, 24 Union St., Portland, Ore.

WILL SELL: All issues complete Nov. 18, 1917 to Apr. 30, 1924. Also twelve issues of *Romance*, Nov. 1919 to Oct. 1920. Best offer takes the lot.—Address GEORGE FUCHS, 2059 Webster Ave., New York City.

WILL SELL: 145 issues all in good condition. Best offer takes the lot, buyer to pay postage.—Address MRS. A. I. ALLISON, 148 Railroad St., St. Johnsbury, Vt.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it with the manuscript; do not send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3,000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations



Our Camp-Fire is extending its Stations all over the world. Any one belongs who wishes to. Any member desiring to meet those who are still hitting the trails may maintain a Station in his home or shop where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book and maintain his Station in good repute. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the second issue of each month. Address letters regarding stations to J. Cox.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, unstamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, not to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

(See *Lost Trails*)

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(See also under "Standing Information" in "*Ask Adventure*,".)

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure Magazine* by Our Staff of Experts.



QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject *Adventure*, but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and full postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.
2. Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.
3. No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.
4. Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.
5. Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.

1. The Sea Part 1—American Waters

BERIAH BROWN, 1624 Biegelow Ave., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (See next section.)

2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters

CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping
HARRY E. RIESEBERG, Apartment 347-A, Kew Gardens, Washington, D. C. Historical records, tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the United States, Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits

CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (See next section.)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups

CHARLES BELL EMERSON, *Adventure* Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

6. ★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1 Cook Islands, Samoa

TOM L. MILLS, *The Pelding Star*, Pelding, New Zealand.

Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (Postage two cents.)

7. South Sea Islands Part 2 French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumotu, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn).

CHARLES BROWN, JR., P. O. Box 308, San Francisco, Calif. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture.

8. ★ Australia and Tasmania

PHILIP NORMAN, 842 Military Road, Mosman, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (Postage ten cents.)

9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java

FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

10. ★ New Guinea

L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions. Questions regarding the measures or policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered. (Postage ten cents.)

11. Philippine Islands

BUCK CONNOR, L. B. 4., Quartzsite, Ariz. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

12. Hawaiian Islands and China

F. J. HALTON, 1402 Lytton Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

★ (Enclose addressed envelop with ten cents in stamps NOT attached)

13. Japan

GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

14. Asia Part 1 Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Borneo

CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

15. Asia Part 2 Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan

GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York. Hunting, trading, traveling, customs.

16. Asia Part 3 Coast of Northeastern Siberia, and Adjoining Waters

CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure*. Natives, language, mining, trading, customs, climate. Arctic Ocean: Winds, currents, depths, ice conditions, walrus-hunting.

17. Asia Part 4 North China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan

GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., 41 Rue de France, Tientsin, China. Natives, languages, trading, customs, climate and hunting.

18. Africa Part 1 Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria

ROBERT SIMPSON, care *Adventure*. Labor, trade, expenses, outfitting, living conditions, tribal customs, transportation.

19. * Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo

CHARLES BEADLE, care Agence Cook et Fils, Nice, France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport.

20. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand

CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, care Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

21. * Africa Part 4 Portuguese East

R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

22. Africa Part 5 Morocco

GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure*. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

23. Africa Part 6 Tripoli

CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

24. Africa Part 7 Egypt, Tunis, Algeria

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.

25. Africa Part 8 Sudan

W. T. MOFFAT, 67 Burlington Road, Fulham, London, S. W. 6, England. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history.

26. Turkey

J. F. EDWARDS, David Lane, East Hampton, N. Y. Travel, history, geography, politics, races, languages, customs, commerce, outdoor life, general information.

27. Asia Minor

(Editor to be appointed.)

28. Bulgaria, Roumania

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, topography, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

29. Albania

ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

30. Jugo-Slavia and Greece

LIEUT. WILLIAM JENNA, Plattsburg Barracks, New York. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

31. Scandinavia

ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

32. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland

FRED. F. FLEISCHER, care *Adventure*. History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, outdoor life.

33. Great Britain

THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information.

34. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile

EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

35. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423 Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

36. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information. Questions regarding employment not answered.

37. Central America

CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

38. Mexico Part 1 Northern

J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

39. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California

C. R. MAHAFFEY, care of Roadmaster, S. P. Co., San José, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

40. * Canada Part 1 Height of Land, Region of Northern Quebec and Northern Ontario (except Strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin

S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

41. * Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario

HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

42. * Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario

A. D. L. ROBINSON, 173 Maple Ave., Pembroke, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

43. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District

T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

44. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta

(Editor to be appointed.) Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

45. * Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin

RECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

46. * Canada Part 7 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec

JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

47. Alaska

THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, Larkspur, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

48. Baffinland and Greenland

VICTOR SHAW, Ketchikan, Alaska. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

49. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.

E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

50. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico

H. F. ROBINSON, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance; oil-fields; hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

51. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.

FRANK MIDDLETON, 509 Fremont St., Laramie, Wyo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

52. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains

CHESTER C. DAVIS, Helena, Mont. Agriculture, mining,

northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

53. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country

R. T. NEWMAN, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, history and inhabitants.

54. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.

J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

55. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.

JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

56. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

57. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfitting, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

58. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River

GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (See next section.)

59. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn. Michigan and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks

RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Ingewood, Calif. Automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating, river-tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs.

60. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers

HOWARD A. SHANNON, care of *Adventure*. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

61. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville

HOWARD A. SHANNON, care of *Adventure*. Okefinokee and Dismal, Ocranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

62. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Alleganies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

63. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.

HAPSBURG LIEBE, Box 432, Orlando, Fla. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

64. Eastern U. S. Part 6 Maine

DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

A.—Radio

DONALD McNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

VICTOR SHAW, Ketchikan, Alaska. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads

—songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should not be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*.

2.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Tropical Forestry

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

G.—Aviation

LIEUT.-COL. W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., 2940 Newark St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

H.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

FRED. F. FLEISCHER care of *Adventure*. *United States*: Military history, military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign*: Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general "Ask Adventure" section. *General*: Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command. Questions regarding enlisted personnel and officers, except such as are published in Officers' Directory, can not be answered.

I.—American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

ARTHUR WOODWARD, 217 W. 125th St., New York. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

J.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write J. Cox, care *Adventure*.

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico**, and customs receiverships in **Santo Domingo and Haiti**, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska**, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii**, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba**, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agr., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.**, Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **Canal Zone**, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C. National Rifle Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States Revolver Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National Parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

Personal

READERS have been asking for the autobiographies of "Ask Adventure" editors; and those staff members who believe that a few words about themselves will promote a better acquaintanceship all around, are responding to the request. The order in which these autobiographies are printed doesn't signify anything. They are withdrawn from the file at random:

Quartzsite, Ariz.

In response to the request of *our* editor, I rise to give you just a little dope upon myself as "Ask Adventure" editor of Philippine Islands (Number 11) and as the Keeper of Camp-Fire Station 209, Quartzsite, Arizona.

I have just turned twoscore of busy years; believe that Mrs. Buck has me roped and hog-tied for life—that's doin' a darn good job at that.

I ran away from home at thirteen years and could scarcely read or write my own language. Worked like a little trooper in Summer that I might attend school in Winter, and did many early morning chores to boot. My work after finding myself a lone wolf was anything and everything respectable—from washing dishes in a one-man beanery, shining shoes, selling papers, selling goods in a store to wrestling pipe—three-inch—and bucking tongs on a pipeline.

1898 found me just beyond 15 years when McKinley called for 75,000 volunteers. I "lied like a gentleman" and made it. Although they knew I was not eighteen, I was bugler, Company M, Second West Volunteer Infantry.

I was mustered out and enlisted in United States Navy and hit the Islands in '99, and remained there until August, 1902, serving one month on board the U. S. S. *Helena*, and the remainder of that time on board the U. S. S. *Paragua*—a small gumboat captured from Montijo by Admiral Dewey. This service was arduous—landing soldiers under fire, patrolling the islands, forming our offensives, and in all I became quite familiar with considerable over one hundred of the Islands.

I was with General Hughes—Commander of the Department of Visayas—when he made the first official calling trip around Paragua Island, now known as Palawan, and it carried us into many little bays and harbors that were tucked far away from the world's eyes. And many times we were not sure whether we were coming out alive or not. That island is now the penal island of the Philippine Government.

I served in Panay, Cebu, Mindanao, Sulu (Jolo), Samar, Mindoro, Luzon, Masbate, Bohol, Negros, Leyte and Sandakan, British North Borneo. I served many weeks in each of the following rivers: Poland of Panay, Gondara, Subig of Samar with boys from the Ninth and Tenth Infantry and Ninth and Tenth Cavalry. With the Eighteenth U. S. Infantry, Twenty-sixth and Thirty-eighth U. S. Volunteers on Panay. With the Thirtieth Infantry on the island of Mindoro—the north and west coast. The fog of time has shut out the various other regiments and detachments I have cooperated with during those years.

I served as body-guard to Captain Maxon, U. S.

Naval civil engineer, on the Alongopo or Subig Naval Base Survey, and reaped a little skirmish from that trip. I also served under Commander H. H. Hasley, who will be remembered as navigating the mammoth dry dock *Dewey* successfully to Alongopo, Luzon Island.

I stood guard upon the person of General Lukbon, the Terror of Samar, after his capture by Lieutenant Alphonse Strebler, later a member of the Artillery Corps. I had the general's personal flag and autographs by his secretary, but some hound lifted them from my kit.

I came out of the service with honorable mention for rendering aid to two wounded comrades and have been recommended for Medal of Honor for saving the U. S. S. *Paragua* from utter destruction by fires in the ship's magazine. This record is filed in connection with letter of commendation:

CONNOR, GEORGE W., EX-COXSWAIN,
U. S. NAVY. 1554306, Meritorious Conduct
of. Office Secretary of Navy.

I later served as corporal, U. S. Signal Corps, and was custodian at the Army War College, 22 Jackson Place, Washington, D. C., for the three years of my enlistment, serving under Generals Barry, Bliss and Wotherspoon. I hold one of the few discharges signed by a general officer—my own signed by General Wotherspoon as commander of detachment, and Major C. J. Bailey—now major-general.

• While at the War College I attended school at nights and handled the electrical appliances of the college. Also aided in the development of the Army identification system at the Lemon Building, Washington, D. C. Was recommended for Lieutenant in the Philippine Constabulary.

Later served in the State Rangers of Texas under Captains John R. Hughes and Ransom. Then short stories. The position of secretary to Colonel Wm. F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) claimed my life for several years as well as that of being Indian agent for the show. Was adopted into the Brulé tribe of Sioux and was given the name of Wagalex Conka, meaning Big Turkey.

During the World War was appointed captain, Field Signal Battalion, but physical exams. threw me out. Had five other rejections from united service.

Am a homesteader, and have given much time to motion pictures.

Many times some one jumps up and declares me a four-flusher—that is what I term it—but, thank goodness, I stand upon my own feet, and if any one doubts any of the foregoing statements he can satisfy his curiosity easily enough.

I always have a warm spot for real adventurers, and outstanding among them is Colonel James Morris Morgan—see issue of April 30th, 1924.

I hope that in the near future I can announce something of much interest to all readers of Camp-Fire. *Hasta luego, compadres.*—BUCK CONNOR.

The full statement of the sections in this department as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

Notes from "A. A." Men

TRIBUTES to the late Frank Morton, whose death was announced in the issue of June 10, 1924, continue to come in. The following is from Mr. Morton's successor as "Ask Adventure" editor for Australia and Tasmania:

Mosman, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia.

I have sat at many Camp-Fires in Australia and New Zealand and Tasmania and have watched the reluctant flames flickering on the shafts of eucalypts, so if no one wishes to object, I should like to sit in with the *Adventure* crowd to announce the sudden death of Frank Morton, for a long time one of your "Ask Adventure" editors.

Morton was Australia's most caustic critic. He occupied in a minor degree the same position as the immortal H. L. Mencken, late of the *Smart Set*—a writer without compare in the Anglo-Saxon world. At least I think so.

Morton loathed the prig and the hypocrite. The shams of civilization raised his worst passions. He pushed a fearless pen, dipped in vinegar and gall when the occasion required it. Withal, he was jovial, generous, hospitable and a *bon vivant*. A bottle of sparkling wine caused him to bubble over with the joy of life.

He was broad-minded where there was justification. He reveled in life. He was an artist to his finger-tips. He had read extensively and had more than a nodding acquaintance with every international writer of repute, and he wrote and sang with the joyful lilt of the true poet. Verily, he was of the salt of the earth, his heart was of gold, like that of every true Bohemian, and he died as poor as Lazarus. Peace to his shade, rest to his soul, comrades.—PHILLIP NORMAN.

DONEGAN WIGGINS, one of our firearms experts, on the wire. The International Reply Coupon to which he refers is decorated with pictures of the two hemispheres—the Old World to the left, the New World to the right—with a lady flying between. The cancelation mark which must be put on by the post-office where you buy the Coupon must appear over the picture of the Old World, to the right hand of the flying beauty:

Salem, Ore.

Wonder if you'll do a little thing for me?

The boys have been sending me the International Reply Coupons, and in some cases have done as did the man who sent the enclosed; failed to have the selling office cancel them with its canceling-stamp. This prevents me from redeeming the coupon, and thus I'm out the postage.

Wonder if you would mind putting in a little squib, asking the fellows who are abroad to see that these coupons are canceled ere mailing them to me?

Hope every one is festive. Be good, or caution-ridden.—DON.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Trails of the Old West

BEST time ever made between the Mississippi and California before the advent of the railroad was made by the Pony Express when taking President Lincoln's First Inaugural Message from St. Joseph, Mo., to Sacramento, Calif.—about 1,400 miles in seven days and seventeen hours. That's better than seven and a half miles an hour, going night and day:

Question:—"I want to get straight in my mind the old trails of the West before the railroads came along. I am therefore enclosing a blank schoolboy's map of the States and ask that you be so kind as to trace on it for me the course of the Oregon Trail, the Santa Fé Trail and the Chisholm Cattle Trail. Am I asking too much?"

Now here's another thing. Were the buffalo-hide hunters a wild, peculiar breed unto themselves as I have been led to believe by cursory reading? And do you know of any book which discusses them?

Do you know where, from what person, I can obtain any of the stamps used on the letters of the Pony Express? If so I wish you would give me their names and addresses so that I could communicate with them.—CHARLES G. WILSON, Lansdowne, Penn.

Answer, by Mr. Middleton—The Oregon and the Santa Fé Trails were one from Independence, Mo., up the valley of the Kansas River to about where the City of Lawrence, Kan., now stands. The Santa Fé Trail here turned to the southwest, and is almost identical with the present line of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fé R.R. from Kansas City, Mo., to Santa Fé, N. M.

The Oregon Trail kept on up the Kansas River to where the city of Topeka—at that time Papan's Ferry—now stands. There it left the river and crossed what are now Pottawatomie, Marshall and Washington Counties in Kansas. From the Kansas line the trail ran northwesterly until it struck the Platte River where the town of Grand Island now stands. A short distance above Grand Island it crossed the Platte and followed the north bank to Fort Laramie, Wyo.

Another trail left the Santa Fé near the present city of Great Bend, Kan., followed the Arkansas River to Bent's Fort, thence northward, descending the south fork of the Platte for some distance, then crossed over to the north fork, striking that stream a little below Scott's Bluff, Neb., and ascending the North Platte to Ft. Laramie, where it joined the main trail. These two trails were united and divided several times across what is now the State of Wyoming, finally separating for good near the western boundary of the State. The northern branch ran by way of Fort Hall and Boise to Oregon; and the southern, by the way of Salt Lake, to the Sacramento Valley in California. This was known as, the California Trail, the Mormon Trail and the Salt Lake Trail.

The Oregon Trail across the State of Wyoming is almost identical with the original Overland Trail. Can not say just when it was first traversed, although Robert Stuart crossed the now State of Wyoming by this trail in 1812.

Am marking off some of the other early trails in this territory—Ferendrye, in 1743; Colter, in 1807; W. P. Hunt, in 1811. I think that in Thwait's "Early Western Travels" (Vol. XXX) you will find much to aid you in your quest. C. G. Coutant, in "Early History of Wyoming" (Vol. 1) tells much of interest. If possible, get his version of the Astorians, Captain Bonville, Frémont in Wyoming, the Overland Trail, the Bloody Year on the Plains, Report of the Powder River Expedition, Events of the Bozeman Road, etc., etc.

Am tracing the trails mentioned across the States of Colorado and Wyoming as requested, although the Chisholm Trail is rather vague to me. Don't put too much dependence on them—any of them—for accuracy. The Oregon, or Overland, Trail was undoubtedly, in my mind, traversed by the six Astorians who left the Walla Walla Valley in June, 1812, to return to St. Louis. General William H.



Ashley discovered the route through the South Pass in 1824, and the first written account of the trail was that of John B. Wyeth in 1833. Kansas, Nebraska and Wyoming have all made appropriations to defray the expense of placing markers along this historic highway at the most noted stopping-places, the most eastern monument in Wyoming being located at Torrington, the county seat of Goshen County.

I do not believe that the buffalo-hunters of those days were a breed peculiar unto themselves—not any more so than the cow-boy of the later day. Remember that the country was in its infancy and that it took the hardy man to survive. They all—stage-drivers, freighters, gold-seekers, trappers, hunters, etc.—worked hard, played hard, lived hard and sometimes died hard.

Sorry, but I can not say as to where you might get hold of any of the stamps that were used in the Pony Express days. Some State historical society might be able to accommodate; try Cheyenne, care of State Capitol Bldg.

Hope that this information will be of benefit to you. If I can be of aid in the future, command me at any time.

Joining Up with the B. S. A. P.

NO CHANCE at all. L. Patrick Greene, of our staff, agrees with Mr. Beadle. And he used to be with the service:

Question:—"I would like to get some information about the British police outfits in Africa:

What are the usual duties?

Where are recruits taken, and for how long a period?

Pay and allowances?

What would be the best way to get to a recruiting depot?

Is the climate of British Africa unhealthy for a white man who has spent two years in Santo Domingo?

How are living conditions?

I am a Canadian who has caught the *Wanderlust* and, not finding enough adventure and travel in the U. S. marines, would like to hit some other real he-man's outfit."—H. J. H., San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic.

Is an ex-marine qualified for the British Army? Please do not give my name in *Adventure*."

Answer, by Mr. Beadle:—*Re British police outfits:* The two principal are the British South African Police and the South African Constabulary; duties about the same except that the latter frequent more civilized districts and deal therefore more with whites, strikes and other excuses for trouble. The pay of the former is five shilling per day—one shilling deferred until end of service—ration allowance of two shillings; equipment, horse, medical attention, etc. Recruits usually taken in the Cape or Rhodesia; not much chance these days since the armistice. Service is three years. Take nearest steamer for Cape Town or Durban and then rail up to Rhodesia.

No; reckon climate generally speaking pretty healthy for one accustomed to San Domingo. Living conditions excellent in towns; on veld of course usual camping conditions, helped out with game. I shouldn't take a chance of going that distance to join, for as I've said it's pretty crammed these days with recruits.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Philippine Land Laws

A CARABAO is a water-buffalo used as a draft-animal:

Question:—"I am interested in raising cattle in the Philippine Islands.

Please explain the following:

How much land may one homestead, lease and buy suitable for cattle, and cost per acre?

Cost of young stock per head and market?

Wages for help?

Best island for such a venture?

Cost of living, diseases, etc.?"—CLAIRE ELLIS, Camas, Wash.

Answer, by Mr. Connor:—Act 2874 of the Philippine Legislature, approved November 29th, 1919, provided that any citizen of the Philippine Islands of the United States over the age of eighteen years, or the head of a family who does not own more than fifty-nine acres in the Philippines, may enter a homestead of not more than fifty-nine acres of agricultural land of the public domain.

Any citizen of lawful age of either country, or any corporation or association of which at least sixty-four per cent. of the capital stock, or of any interest

in said capital stock belonging wholly to citizens of either countries, may purchase a tract of land not to exceed 247 acres as an individual; but a corporation may purchase 2,530 acres.

The Philippine Land Law provides that an individual may lease for a period of twenty-five years, 2,530 acres. In case that at the expiration of that period, if the lessee has made improvement which in the discretion of Secretary of Agriculture would justify a renewal, an additional period of twenty-five years may be granted.

The Friar Lands were purchased through the intervention of Civil Governor Wm. H. Taft for \$7,239,784.16. Any person of the above status may purchase not to exceed thirty acres of Friar Land estate.

The grazing-lands will be found in the Province of Nueva Vizcaya and the mountain Province of Luzon, and vast green plateaus of Budidnon in Mindanao Island. That is 20,000 square miles.

There are only 603,107 head of cattle and 1,271,000 head of carabao.

The diseases are malaria, beriberi and tuberculosis. Of course one might expect at any time an outbreak of bubonic plague.

Expenses to live as you would want to will be slightly above your expenses in this country, provided you raise your own garden and furnish your own meat.

Have I answered you satisfactorily? I hope so. Thank you!

Opportunities in Alaska

THE subjoined monograph has been printed in leaflet form on hard paper. The leaflet may be obtained free from the "Ask Adventure" expert responsible for it: namely Theodore S. Solomons, Larkspur, Calif. Don't expect any response unless you enclose addressed envelop and return postage:

A young man who is footloose, possesses ordinary health and strength, and has the character and determination to keep straight, work, and stay with it for an indeterminate number of years, ordinarily will do better in Alaska than here in the United States, because it is a new country of vast resources, growing slowly but steadily. He must not expect to "strike it rich." Even in bonanza days of placer-mining few made good compared to the mobs that stormed the gold-camps. Farming, stock-raising, reindeer-herding, mining in many forms—gold, copper, oil, coal, and the like—and general business industry in connection with the mines and towns afford chances for solid success. Hunting and trapping are alluring to many who write me, but except those few who are experienced and clever and willing to isolate themselves in distant wilds, there isn't much in it, since the natives get a great deal, and the country has been a fur country for more than a hundred and fifty years.

It is foolish to plan too definitely on either a particular place or a particular occupation and take a big outfit to the place. No pen picture of the country or the life will suffice to enable an intending settler to make such a choice wisely—to fit his own special tastes and needs.

I always advise going up there with no outfit

except a few personal necessities or a favorite gun—if hunting is a part of the plan—and then looking around. Work here and there, see the country, absorb its peculiar features, and *then* make a sensible choice—or go out again.

Keep what money you bring in your pocket, in the form of exchange if possible. Use it later—when you won't lose it. Opportunities come up constantly where the employment of a little cash may mean everything to a young man's future—a good "prospect" or lease on a mine, a store business, a lot, a boat—many things. The tenderfoot, investing rashly, is soon stripped.

It costs all the way from thirty to a hundred and fifty dollars to get into Alaska from Seattle, according to where one goes. Work may usually be obtained by waiting one's chance.

The one best piece of advice I can give with regard to acquiring information is to obtain—mostly for nothing—all information issued by the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior, Washington, D. C., on the subject of Alaska for the settler, miner, etc., and if you have any certain district particularly in mind, the pamphlets relating to that district issued by the Geological Survey (part of the Department of the Interior). You will be sent an index of all publications first if you wish it, and may then make selection. Library books on Alaska, while interesting, have not kept pace with conditions, and are usually more picturesque than reliable.

If, after reading further and giving the matter more thought, you still wish to make the venture, you may write me again, asking specific questions, and I shall be glad to help you further.—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS.

When you get something for nothing, don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

Wing Shooting

ADVICE for the beginner:

Question:—"Would you be kind enough to give me some information on wing shooting—how to judge distance, what lead to give on ducks and geese, what size shot, etc.?"

Do you think two ivory sights on shotgun any advantage to hunter?

If you have any literature on this subject would be very glad to get it. If not where could I get it?"—PALMER A. BERG, Langdon, N. Dak.

Answer, by Mr. Thompson:—I generally lead ducks and geese from four to six feet, a little high, and try to gage the speed at which they are flying. You can't lead too far. Sling ahead, and when you have right lead press the trigger; but do not try to stop the gun but let the recoil do it, otherwise you will jerk off of alinement. Shot for ducks from No. 7½ chilled to No. 5 chilled; for geese, No. 1 to BB.

Yes, I think unless you have shot some that the ivory sights will help you line up on flying game more accurately, especially the double ones.

In the enclosed booklet you will find a list of books which will help you select one on wing shooting. Just have confidence in yourself, whether you can hit a barn door or not, and never jerk your trigger, and you will make a success.

Make Your Questions Specific

STILL another inquirer who fires a broadside into the air; and still another patient "A. A." man who gives an answer that he is not required to give:

Question:—"Please send me general information on north China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan."—MAURICE TOGUE, Milroy, Ind.

Answer, by Dr. Twomey:—I have just received your letter asking for general information about north China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan. It is rather hard for me to comply with your request since the countries you mention have an area larger than the United States and are inhabited by numerous tribes and races of people having different languages and different customs. If it is possible for you to write me again and ask definite questions about the countries, I shall be glad to do my best to furnish the information that you desire. In the mean time I will try to tell you something about the countries mentioned in your letter.

In north China the climate is temperate. There is a small amount of rainfall and little snow. This territory is inhabited by the Chinese and the Manchus, who conquered the Chinese several centuries ago. The Chinese language is spoken; but there are many dialects, and it is difficult for a native of one part of the country to understand a man from another province. Agriculture is the

chief industry, although in some parts of north China coal, copper and iron are mined.

The amount of game in this country is surprising. Although the country is very thickly populated there are large numbers of snipe, ducks, geese, deer, wild bears and other animals. Peking, the capital of China, is located in north China and is the most interesting city in China.

Mongolia is situated north of China and is chiefly grazing-land and desert. There are a number of towns and cities, but most of the inhabitants are nomads who travel wherever there is sufficient food to feed their flocks.

Chinese Turkestan is west of China proper and south of Siberia. Much of this country has not been explored. It contains remains of some old settlements; and the present inhabitants are like the Mongolians, largely nomads who travel wherever they can find food for their cattle and sheep. In a short time I hope to have a booklet printed giving general information about these countries, and as soon as it is ready I will send you a copy.

"ASK ADVENTURE" editors are appointed with extreme care. If you can meet our exacting requirements and qualify as an expert on some topic or territory not now covered, we shall be glad to talk matters over with you. Address F. K. NOYES, *Adventure*, New York.



LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives; inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

MATTHEWS, HARRY ROBBINS. Englishman. About five feet seven inches tall, fair hair, prominent nose. Last heard from at San Antonio or El Paso, Texas, in 1890-91. Left St. Louis, Missouri, for Texas with vague ideas of future. Last work known was on Southern Pacific Railway, working west and north. Was then about twenty-four years of age. Any information will be appreciated by his brother-in-law.—Address **GEORGE S. SINGER**, 45 Friday St., London, Eng.

WOULD be glad to hear from any or all of the boys who soldiered with me in Co. K, 102, U. S. Infantry during war.—Address **MERLE A. WITHAM**, Wrightstown, New Jersey.

SHARPE, CECIL. Your mother passed away April 17, 1924. She left a message for you. I am sick in hospital. Need you badly. Think of Muriel.—DAD.

A LIST of unclaimed manuscripts will be published in the January 10th and July 10th issues of *Adventure*, and a list of unclaimed mail will be published in the last issue of each month.

DEREUME, AUGUSTE. Formerly a resident of the province of Manitoba, Canada. Engaged in tea business. Any information will be appreciated.—Address **RAYMOND DEREUME**, Punksutawney, Pa.

BEAMES, JOE. Your children need you. Write your sister-in-law.—**EMMA KOEGER WILSON**, Gen. Del., Omaha, Nebraska.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all un-found names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

MCDONALD, JAMES. Last heard of in March, 1924. He was then employed by the Crowell Publishing Co., Cleveland, Ohio. Age eighteen years, five feet six inches tall, red wavy hair, fair complexion, round face. His mother is seriously ill and worries. Any information will be appreciated.—Address, **THE SALVATION ARMY**, 120-130 W. 14th St., N. Y. C.

MOORE, ANNA. Formerly of Boston, Mass. Please write.—Address **HAZEL B. OTIS**, Hotel Rossmore, Atlantic Ave., Boston, Mass.

SEMPLE, JAMES LITHGOW. Last heard from in Chicago, Ill., about eighteen months ago. Age forty-five years, red hair, blue eyes, teeth missing in front, florid complexion, weight one hundred and seventy-five pounds, height five feet eight inches. Any information will be appreciated.—Address **S. A. SEMPLE**, 86 Lord Ave., Bayonne, New Jersey.

RYAN, JAMES A. Last heard of in Endicott, New York. Enlisted January 21, 1916. Served in Medical Corps, Panama Canal Zone. Discharged from Camp Meade in November, 1922. Any information will be appreciated.—Address **PATRICK H. RYAN**, 123 Scio St., Rochester, N. Y.

GAFFNEY, J. E. (Red) Seafaring man. Has relatives in Cambridge, Mass. Any information will be appreciated.—Address **LESLIE H. FERGUSON**, 501 Walsh St., Austin, Texas.

WILL M. L. who has sole copy of poem commencing: "Music and Song and the Rhythmic Dance" write N. D. (the author) care of *Adventure*, giving present address?

WICKENS, ALAN. Last heard from in San Francisco, Calif. Your old buddy is anxious to hear from you. Please write me.—Address **VIC**, 73 Main West, North Bay, Ontario, Canada.

MACDONALD, FRED B. (Bozo). An old friend who was with him on U. S. S. B. lay up fleet at Port Costa, Calif., would like to hear from him. Any information will be appreciated.—Address **E. L. NEWLAND** (Slim), Lebanon Jct., Kentucky.

IKE. Please communicate with **MAGPIE**, who was in the "Whirlwind" on the eventful trip down Cub Creel. Your Dad is worried.—Address **H. GREY HARVEY**, Charlotte, C. H., Va.

WADDELL, WILLIAM or James. Formerly residents of East Boston, Mass., but moved to Seattle, Washington, about twenty-five years ago. A chum of those past boy days is anxious to hear from either of them.—Address **M. M. McDONALD**, 1232 West Grand Boulevard, Detroit, Mich.

DAVIS, LILLIAN. Resident of Lynn, Mass., where she was employed by a telephone company, but married and moved to Everett, Wash., about 1912 or 1913. Any information will be appreciated.—Address **JACK McDONALD**, 1232 West Grand Boulevard, Detroit, Mich.

KNIGHT, JOHN. Left New Haven, joined the Canadian Army, No. 254973, Royal Field Artillery. Was reported killed at Arras, July 25, 1918, by a man by the name of **FRANK CLARK**. Any information concerning Frank Clark, or any one who was with KNIGHT when he was killed, will be appreciated by his wife and four little children.—Address **MRS. K. KNIGHT**, 288 Main St., Bristol, Conn.

THE following have been inquired for in either the July 20 or Aug. 10, 1924, issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine.

DAMS, JOE; Barr, Joseph, L.; Bateman, Leonard; Bowman, Jesse; Brothen, Carl or Charley; Clarence, Roy P.; Conniston, Art; Connors, Eugene or Gene; Cook, Harvey Lawrence; Curtis, Frank E.; Dillmore, Jack; Eadon, Lionel Alfred; Green, John; McDermott, W.; Mitchell, Etta; Mitchell, Dr. Gordon; Morgan, Newton A.; Morgan, Walter V.; Parrish, Harry; Reed, Claud; Thompson, Myron and Lawrence; Tomb, William.

MISCELLANEOUS—Case family; Relatives of Hazel Chreiman; Z. T. H.

UNCLAIMED MAIL.

BRENNAN, Edie J.; Havens, Fletcher P.

A COMPLETE list of unclaimed mail will be published in December 30th and June 10th issues of Adventure.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

SEPTEMBER 10TH ISSUE

Besides the complete novel and two complete novelettes mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE VICTOR

What happened to the bright young man who set out to put "pep" into Malaysia.

Dale Collins

VENGEANCE

A trapper who was hated by his partner, and even by his dog.

Jack Oppenheimer

MAMBA THE TERRIBLE

Death lurks in an African lake.

Leo Walmsley

IROQUOIS! IROQUOIS! Part IV

A dead Indian and a message.

Hugh Pendexter

CAP'N JENKS

A horse that answered a bugle-call.

S. Omar Barker

PASS UNTIL MIDNIGHT

The barber put some "poo-poo water" on the artilleryman's hair, and then—

Clements Ripley



Still Farther Ahead

THE three issues following the next will contain *long stories* by J. Allan Dunn, Talbot Mundy, Harold Lamb, Walter J. Coburn, Arthur D. Howden Smith, Alvin F. Harlow, Thomson Burtis, John Webb, E. S. Pladwell, Leonard H. Nason and H. C. Bailey; and short stories by Warren H. Miller, J. H. Greene, F. St. Mars, William Byron Mowery, Herman Petersen, James Parker Long, John Dorman, Raymond S. Spears, Thomas Topham, George E. Holt, J. D. Newsom, Charles Tenney Jackson, and G. W. Barrington; stories of gold-hunters in Australia, secret service men in India, John Paul Jones in Russia, cowboys on the Western ranges, plague-fighters on the Malay islands, Indians in Kentucky, rum-runners in New Orleans, fur factors in Canada, Army fliers on the Border, viking-farers in Norway, constables in cowtowns, desert riders in Morocco, rebels in Mexico, doughboys on the Atlantic, knights-at-arms in medieval France, white traders in the South Seas, adventurers the world around.

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